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**'A Comparison of the Evangelical Movement in Russia in the 1920s and the 1990s'**

**Alexander Yuchkovski**

OCMS, Ph.D.

October 2014

**ABSTRACT**

This thesis is devoted to a comparative study of the evangelical movement in the territory of the former Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1990s. The possibility to compare the two periods is due to their common historical trends of liberalization in government policy in relation to religious organizations, as well as the nature of the evangelical movement at this time. The thesis is to identify and analyse three key trends in the development of the evangelical movement inherent in both periods, such as the desire of the cultural establishment in the East Slavic society under the domination of other religious or ideological systems; the dynamic development of relations with the state; and the development of church structure and solving of church matters. In the study, the author argues that the gospel spiritual awakening in the 1920s and 1990s is directly related to the temporary decline in the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church, which treated religious minorities as competitors as well as the weakness of the state ideology. However, even after an active spiritual awakening the evangelical movement remained a minority and covered no more than two percent of the population. The author explores the relationship between evangelical churches and the state, which in both historical periods was undergoing transition and crisis. A significant difference which was found in the relationship for the two study periods is shown. The research investigates the particular church development and explains the reasons for the differences and similarities in the nature of church life and ministry of the evangelical movement in the 1920s and 1990s.



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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In Middlesex University

July, 2015

Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

## DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Date

17/7/2015

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to my family that has been lovingly supporting me throughout the process of writing, and to the Church of New Beginning of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. My brother Vitaly and sister Anna have been encouraging me in the lengthy journey of completion of Ph.D. studies. To my Slavic brothers and sisters in Christ I owe gratitude for many wonderful years of ministry. Together we went through many difficult and wonderful experiences in our walk with God.



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## Contents

Dedication.....	7
Acknowledgments.....	8
Table of Contents.....	9
List of Abbreviations.....	12
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction.....	15
1.1 The Need for this Study .....	15
1.2 The Purpose of this Study .....	16
1.3 Survey of Literature .....	17
1.3.1 Soviet, Post-Soviet and Orthodox Authors.....	17
1.3.2 Research by Scholars familiar with the Evangelical-Baptist Movement ...	20
1.3.3 Western Scholarship .....	22
1.4 Primary Sources .....	23
1.5 Methodology .....	26
1.6 New Knowledge and the Contribution of this Thesis .....	27
1.7 Design of this Thesis: Brief Outline of the Contents of Chapters.....	28
CHAPTER TWO: EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN AND BAPTIST MOVEMENTS IN RUSSIA FROM THEIR BEGINNING IN THE 1860s TO THE FIRST TWO DECADES OF THE 20TH CENTURY .....	30
2.1 Introduction.....	30
2.2 The Beginnings of the Evangelical and Baptist Movements .....	30
2.2.1 Factors that Contributed to the Formation of the Evangelical-Christians and Baptist Movements in Russia .....	31
2.2.2 The Emergence of the Evangelical-Christians Movement.....	32
2.2.3 The Beginning of Baptist Movement in the Russian Empire.....	33
CHAPTER THREE: EVANGELICALS IN THE U.S.S.R. IN THE 1920s .....	65
3.1 Introduction.....	65
3.2 Mission and Evangelism in New Conditions.....	67
3.2.1 Evangelicalism and Ideological Changes in Revolutionary Russia .....	67
3.3 Strategy of Evangelism in 1920s.....	72
3.4 Mission and Evangelism: Results .....	77
3.5 Evangelicals and the Soviet Government .....	80
3.6 Evangelical Agricultural Communes and Cooperatives .....	82

3.7 Evangelicals in Competition with the Bolshevik Government.....	87
3.8 Structure and Development of Evangelical movement.....	100
CHAPTER FOUR: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR POST-SOVIET EVANGELICALS IN THE 1990S AND THEIR RESPONSE TO THE NEW CHALLENGES .....	109
4.1 Introduction .....	109
4.2 Evangelicals and New Social Tendencies in Post-Soviet Lands.....	109
4.2.1 Crisis of the 1990s and eschatological sentiment of believers .....	109
4.2.2 Challenge of Religious Freedom .....	112
4.3 The Challenge of Westernization .....	114
4.5 The State and the Church .....	127
4.5.1 The History of Forming of the Suffering Church .....	127
4.6 Evangelicals and Military Service .....	137
4.7 Evangelical Emigration of 1980s – 1990s as a Result of Soviet State Persecutions of the Church.....	144
4.8 The Development of Evangelical Churches in the Post-Soviet Space.....	160
4.8.1 Tradition and Traditionalism of Post-Soviet Evangelicals .....	160
4.8.2 Liturgical Aspects of Church Life .....	164
4.8.4 The Role of Pastor .....	176
4.8.5 The Role of Women in Evangelical Churches .....	178
4.8.6 The Question of Development Strategy and Education .....	182
4.9 Conclusion.....	188
CHAPTER FIVE: COMPARISON OF THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT IN THE 1920S AND THE 1990s .....	190
5.1 Introduction .....	190
5.3 Evangelical Movement and the Government .....	195
5.5 Conclusion.....	202
6 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	204
APPENDIX A .....	215
APPENDIX B.....	216
APPENDIX C .....	218
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>220</b>



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARECU	All-Russian Evangelical Christian Union
AUCECB	All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists
AUUECBA	All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Associations
BWA	Baptist World Alliance
CCECB	Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists
CIS	Comonwealth of Independent States
CPR	Council of Prisoners Relatives
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
Dr	Doctor
EAFECEBU	Euro-Asian Federation of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Unions
EBF	European Baptist Federation
ECB	Evangelical Christians-Baptists
GPU	The State Political Administration
KGB	Committee of State Security of the U.S.S.R.
KSMU	Young Communist League of Ukraine
MES	The Movement of Evangelical Soldiers
MSSR	Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic
NEP	The New Economic Policy of Bolsheviks in the 1920s
NKVD	People's Commission on Internal Affairs
POW	Prisoner of War
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
RUECB	Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists
TOZ	Agricultural Association
UECBCM	Union of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Churches in Moldavia

VKP(B)	All-Russian Communist Bolshevik Party
VCHK	All Russian Security Commision
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WCC	World Council of Churches



## **CHAPTER ONE: Introduction**

### **1.1 The Need for this Study**

The 1920s and 1990s were two pivotal periods in the life of Slavic Protestants, both in terms of their missionary activities and numerical growth. Unprecedented historical conditions of these two periods allowed Russian Evangelical Christians a possibility of unique ministry opportunities unparalleled for other periods of their history. These special historical circumstances invite further comparative research and analysis.

A comparison of two historical periods is a risky research, which can be conducted only from a macro-historical perspective. In spite of common limitations of a macro-historical perspective, the history of Slavic Protestants during the 1920s and 1990s provides a number of interesting similarities that can not only justify, but also demonstrate a need for a comparative study. As it becomes apparent in the context of this thesis, such circumstances indeed existed and their comparison significantly enriches our understanding of how the historical experience of those periods influenced the process of formation of Slavic Protestant identity and tradition.

These two historical periods followed major events that caused drastic social transformations in Russia. World War I, several revolutions, plus the fall of one and the establishment of another regime took place during the 1920s. Similarly, the 1990s saw the fall of the regime, the disintegration of the state and establishment of the new political system. In both cases, global social trauma, political and economic transformations, led to fundamental changes in the people's lives and thinking. These changes profoundly influenced the development of the Evangelical movement, its nature and cultural peculiarities.

Similarities between these two different historical periods provided suitable opportunities for growth and development of the Evangelical movement during the early years of the young Soviet state and, later, newly formed countries – former republics of the Soviet Union. One of the characteristics of the two periods was the cessation of persecutions of Slavic Evangelicals. While this was temporary in the 1920s, it was longer lasting in the 1990s. Without a doubt, it encouraged growth and the further development of churches.

The Evangelical Church of the 1920s emerged following harsh persecutions of the tsarist government and the Russian Orthodox Church. After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Russian Evangelicals enjoyed the support of a new government, which aimed to destroy the powerful Russian Orthodox Church. Since Bolshevik leaders like Mikhail Kalinin and Vladimir Bonch-Bruyevich saw similarities between the Evangelical way of life and



Socialism, they supported the idea of permitting Evangelicals to form artisan cooperatives and agricultural communes. Evangelical Christians, as a result, readily embraced new opportunities to influence the life of the country in a positive way under the leadership of ‘Christian idealists,’ Ivan S. Prokhanov and Pavel V. Pavlov.

By 1991, Protestant churches had experienced persecution since the late 1920’s, which weakened their leadership, deprived them of their church buildings (houses of prayer), and by means of atheistic propaganda and physical extermination threatened their very existence as a movement. What kind of movement came out as a result? What kind of mind-set? How did it use the new opportunities? Did they adapt quickly or slowly to the rapid changes that took place in the 1990s? After the collapse of the Soviet Union in December of 1991, Soviet Evangelicals (Baptists and Evangelical Christians formally united into one organisation in 1944) received freedoms they had not enjoyed since the mid-1920s.

Thus, it can be argued that the two periods under investigation do have many historical similarities that in the light of closer analysis, can explain the following: (1) the historical experience of the Evangelical community in the former Soviet Union and distinct traits of its religious culture during the periods of its maximum development and growth opportunities, (2) this study is aimed to find out why Evangelicals faced similar challenges during crucial moments of history and periods of transformation, and (3) it can shed light upon historical patterns, which will influence the effectiveness of the proclamation of the good news of the Gospel in post-Soviet countries.

## **1.2 The Purpose of this Study**

By comparing the development of Russian Protestants in 1920s and 1990s, Evangelicals in Soviet Union as well as after its disintegration dealt with the same set of key problems: (1) the establishment of roots in Eastern Slavic culture, (2) the relationship with the state, and (3) the development of the inner church culture. Keeping these three aspects in mind, various historical events that took place in Evangelical history during the studied periods will be analysed. As part of the third aspect mentioned above, strategic outreach and missionary activities as well as church formation, in which Evangelicals were involved during the 1920s and 1990s, will receive special attention. Historical circumstances that either hindered or led to success of such activities will be analysed as well.

To clarify further the three main aspects of this study, additional questions will be raised. For instance, (1) What was the condition of the Evangelical movement at the dawn of liberalization of the 1920s and 1990s? (2) What distinct traits characterized relationships between the Church and the state in the 1920s and 1990s? (3) To what degree were the

Russian/Soviet Evangelicals able to influence the life of the society and the outcomes of such influence in the 1920s and 1990s? (4) What was the relationship between Evangelicals and the Russian Orthodox Church during the two studied periods? And (5) What aspects of church life and polity were relevant in the context of the studied periods?

Geographically, this study encompasses the territory of the former Soviet Union. However, in the 1990's study, the main emphasis will be on Russia, Ukraine and Moldova as countries of the former Soviet Union with higher numbers of Protestant Christians.

Under the term 'Evangelicals,' documentation shows that primarily, Evangelical Christians and Baptists were two denominations, which united in 1944 into the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (AUCECB). The terms 'Evangelical Baptist Movement' and 'Evangelical Movement' are to be understood as identical.

### **1.3 Survey of Literature**

The Evangelical movement in Russia has been an intriguing subject of research for many scholars. Most sources can be divided into three categories: (1) Soviet and post-Soviet authors, (2) monographs written by authors who had a close interaction with the Evangelical movement and (3) Western scholarship. The following section represents a brief analysis of the three categories of authors.

#### **1.3.1 Soviet, Post-Soviet and Orthodox Authors**

This category of research reflects a secular paradigm for understanding of the historical processes. Many of these authors were biased and cannot offer an objective scholarship since they were under the influence and the instrument of Soviet ideology. This related especially to such Soviet historians as A.I. Klibanov (1969, 1974), G.S. Lyalina (1977) and L.N. Mitrokhin (1974, 1997). They were regarded as classics of scientific atheism and experts in the history of sectarianism (Baptist movement, in particular). Because of the influence of Soviet ideology, their research is now considered to be outdated. Conclusions drawn by them with the Soviet ideological aspect are irrelevant today, as they were misleading in their own time. Yet, some information, presented in their monographs, is still helpful for the proper cultural contextualisation of Soviet Evangelicals in atheistic society.

Klibanov, Lyalina and Mitrokhin, followed the guideline of communist ideology. They saw the Evangelical-Baptist movement in the Soviet Union as the 'last stronghold of capitalism' (Rus. *perezhitok kapitalizma*) and a social phenomenon that would soon be extinct. The main purpose of their research was to discover reasons why religion maintained its relevancy for a small segment of Soviet population in spite of widespread atheistic propaganda. The authors went on ethnographic expeditions and conducted interviews with

believers. Even though their conclusions cannot be viewed as objective, their research sheds light on some important facts from the history of Evangelical movement in the U.S.S.R. during the 1920s.

After the collapse of the U.S.S.R., scholars were likewise attracted to the research and study of Russian Evangelicalism during the 1920s. Their interest was drawn to the analysis of archival documents, which became available after 1991 (Savin, 2005 pp.74-78). Researchers were concerned mostly with the study of different regional factors and various aspects of internal life of Baptist churches (Savin, 2004). A collection of articles was published in 2007 to commemorate the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Evangelical movement in Russia (2007). In it, the authors studied the Evangelical movement in different Russian regions in the 1920s and 1990s.

Recently, a lot of the literature on the state of the evangelical movement in the 1920s emerged. Most of these works were written on the basis of the state archives opened in the post-Soviet era. They are devoted to church-state relations and policy of the state in relation to the evangelical churches. In Ukraine, these studies were carried out by Y. Zin'ko, R. Sitarchuk, V. Lyubaschenko<sup>1</sup>; in Russia - A. Savin, Y. Baca, M. Serdyuk and S. Dudaryenok, and N. Potapova<sup>2</sup>. The main issues addressed by the authors, include first of all, the legislative regulation of the position of evangelical churches, the political repression and restrictions on the rights of believers. In the studies, the emergence of the regional aspect is noticeable.

There was little interest in researching Evangelicals of the 1990's and only an insignificant number of non-Baptist scholars took upon themselves the task of researching Evangelicals in the 1990s. The Evangelical Christian-Baptist movement is not seen by researchers of this period as something unique. Rather they studied it together with changes in the cluster of other movements under the umbrella of Protestantism. Researchers have used

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<sup>1</sup> Zin'ko Y.A. Vlada i protestantizm v Ukraini: problem protistoyannya (1920—1930-ti pp.) // Istoriya Ukraini: malovidomi imena, podii, fakti. — 2005. — Vip. 31. — pp. 54-62., Sitarchuk R.A. Diyal'nist' protestans'kikh konfesiiv i Radyans'kiy Ukraini v kontekstii derzhavnoy politiki (20-30-i pp. XX st.). Disertatsiya ... kandidata ist. nauk. Poltava, 2001, 222s., Lyubaschenko V.I. Protestantizm v Ukraini: geneza, struktura, mistse v sotsiokulturnykh prozessakh. Diserttsiya dokt. filos. nauk. Kiiv, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Savin A.I. Evangelskiye tserkvi v Sovetskom gosudarstve mezhdru dvumya mirivymi voynami. // 105 let legalizatsii russkogo baptizma. Materialy mezhdunarodnoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii. 5-7 oktyabrya 2011 goda. Moskva, 2011. p. 131-134, Bakaye Y.N.. Vlast I religiya: istoriya otnosheniy (1971-1941). Khabarovsk, 2002; Serdyuk M.B., Dudaryenok S.M.. Religioznaya zhizn' Dal'nyego Vostoka (1941-1954). Vladivostok, 2009, Potapova N.B.. Realizatsiya repressivnoy politiki Sovetskoy vlasti protiv veruyuschikh v 20-e — 30-e gg. Na Sakhaline // Sed'maya Dal'nevostochnaya konferentsiya molodykh istorikov: Sbornik materialov. Vladivostok, 2002, pp. 411-417, Potapova N.V.. Baptizm I evangelskoye khristianstvo na Sakhaline v gody Sovetskoy vlasti // Svoboda sovesti v Rossii: istoricheskiy I sovremennyy aspekt. M., 2007. Vyp. 5., pp. 112-121.

political science and sociological approaches, and pay significant attention to the development of churches and denominations (Odintsov, 2010 pp. 289-328).

Researchers in newly established countries – former republics of the U.S.S.R., also took an interest in the study of Soviet Evangelicals. Ukrainian researchers (Kolodnyi, 2003) in particular, attempted to single out distinct traits that characterized growth and development of the Evangelical movement in the country (Yarotskiy, 2002).

Orthodox authors have a significant amount of polemical theological literature, which criticizes evangelical Christianity, Baptists, and Protestantism in general. Among the most outstanding writers the following ones should be noted: Deacon A. Kurayev, V. Rubskoy, Y. Maksimov, D. Sysoyev, V. Akentyev.<sup>3</sup> The characteristic feature of this literature is to demonstrate the 'heresy' of the theological views of the evangelical movement. In particular, the Orthodox authors reject the Protestant claim to biblical centralism, and assert the unacceptability of exclusion of tradition as a sacred phenomenon by Protestants. Some works are written in the genre of personal testimony. For example, V. Akentyev in his book talks about how he personally experienced the kind of conversion from the Baptist faith to Orthodoxy. The motivation of this conversion was the discovery of 'our own', 'traditional' faith which should be loved and honoured as a kind of deep connection with the national culture. However, the influence of the evangelical understanding of faith is noticeable in the works of Orthodox authors – with their veneration of icons, visiting temples, the use of candles and other items of religious practice.

The most irreconcilable and powerful author in modern Russia, who criticises the 'sectarianism' including Protestantism, is A. Dvorkin<sup>4</sup>. Although Dvorkin did not formally reckon Baptists and Evangelical Christians among 'totalitarian sects', he managed to create an image of 'totalitarian sects' as frightening and false in their essence, an 'alien faith', to which all those who did not belong to the official orthodoxy were associated.

Overall, Soviet and post-Soviet researchers were mostly interested in political aspects of the issue. They occupied themselves with study of the influence of the state upon churches

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<sup>3</sup> Kuraeyv A. Protestantam o pravoslavii. Naslediye Christa. – Klin: Christian. zhizn, 2006., Rubskiy V. Protestantam o Pravoslavii. Shtrikhi polemiki. [http://besedy.ucoz.ua/\\_ld/0/65\\_Shtrikhi\\_polemi.pdf](http://besedy.ucoz.ua/_ld/0/65_Shtrikhi_polemi.pdf), Rubskiy V. Teoreticheskiye osnovy I metodologiya polemiki s protestantismom. <http://azbyka.ru/library/teoreticheskiye-osnovy-i-metodologiya-polemiki-s-protestantismom-all.shtml>, Sysoyev D. Progulka protestanta po pravoslavnomu khramu. <http://azbyka.ru/religii/konfessii/progulka-protestanta-po-pravoslavnomu-khramu-all.shtml>, Максимов Ю. Православиye I protestantizm: v chyem raznitsa. <http://azbyka.ru/religii/konfessii/pravoslavie-i-protestantizm-v-chem-raznitsa-all.shtml>, Akentyev V. Operatsiya na serdtse ili iz Baptizma v Pravoslaviye. [http://azbyka.ru/religii/konfessii/akentev\\_iz\\_baptizma\\_01g-all.shtml](http://azbyka.ru/religii/konfessii/akentev_iz_baptizma_01g-all.shtml)

<sup>4</sup> Dvorkin A.L. Sektovedeniye. Totalitarnye sekty. N. Novgorod, 2002.

and strategies used by churches to limit and battle state repression. Scholars paid much less attention to questions related to spiritual awakening, inner church life (Rus. *tserkovnoe stroitel'stvo*) and cultural interaction between believers with the secular society.

### **1.3.2 Research by Scholars familiar with the Evangelical-Baptist Movement**

This category of authors includes those who themselves participated in events that comprise the history of the Evangelical movement in the former U.S.S.R., i.e. ministers, church leaders and lay church members. Their interest lies in preservation of the history of the Evangelical movement. Many of them kept personal archives, which they used when writing autobiographies and memoirs. Some of the authors emigrated to the United States of America and Canada after the break-up of the U.S.S.R.

The literature that falls under this category is quite extensive and diverse. Therefore, it is very important to point out works which describe the history of the Evangelical Baptist movement from the moment of its inception until the present time. Among these works are 'The History of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the U.S.S.R.,' published by the AUCECB (Savinsky, 1989) as well as later official publications of unions of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Russia (Mikhail V. Ivanov, 2007) and Ukraine (2012d). Besides these works, there are other monographs, written by scholars closely involved in the life of Soviet and post-Soviet Evangelicals. Among them are monographs by Sergey Savinsky (1999), Arthur Mitskevich (2007), Yuri Reshetnikov and Sergey Sannikov (2000). Some of them are used as textbooks in theological seminaries and Evangelical universities in the former U.S.S.R. In these works, the 1920s are studied in the context of the overall historical continuity. Only Reshetnikov and Sannikov studied the 1990s, concentrating upon the history of Evangelicals in the Ukraine. In 1996, Sannikov came up with a detailed monograph that analyses the history of Evangelicals in Russia/U.S.S.R. in the 1920s.

A monograph by Tatyana Nikol'skaya on Russian Protestantism and the state in 1905-1991 deserves special mention. Nikol'skaya includes an analysis of the 1920s (2009). Some of her research had great significance for the current project. Nikol'skaya, for example, offered helpful insights on the inner life of unregistered Evangelical believers in the U.S.S.R. that belonged to the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CCECB) (Nicol'skaya, 2001).

Andrei Puzynin in his monograph (based upon his Ph.D. thesis) offered analysis of the theological tradition of Evangelical Christians. His analysis of the 1920s and 1990s was helpful, but at times fragmented. Moscow Baptist historian, Alexei Sinichkin, published

articles that offer insights into the Evangelical missionary movement in the 1920s (Sinichkin, 2011).

More recent publications provide analysis of select aspects of the history of the Evangelical movement. For example, they look at the life and activities of Evangelical leaders, who ministered at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (including 1920s). Vladislav Bachinin (2000) provided a helpful analysis of activities of Ivan S. Prokhanov and his efforts to spiritually reform Russia. Vladimir Popov came up with detailed biographies of Ivan S. Prokhanov (2011) and Vasiliy G. Pavlov (2011). In his book, entitled 'The Cloud of Christ's Witnesses' (Rus. *Oblako svidetelei Khristovykh*), Leonid Kovalenko (2006) wrote about Evangelical leaders of tsarist Russia and the Soviet period (including 1920s).

In her Ph.D. thesis written at the University of Pretoria, Miriam Kuznetsova (2009) analyses the life of Ivan V. Kargel and his theological views. Constantine Prokhorov published a unique research on revival in the 1920s entitled 'The "Golden Age" of Soviet Baptists in 1920s' (2007).

Available sources on Evangelicals in the 1990s are quite fragmented. There are more articles than books written on the subject. There are several important themes to which researchers pay attention. These are issues of theological identity and tradition as well as cultural heritage (Sprinceana, 2011),<sup>5</sup> the autonomy of the local church and emigration (Sergienko, 1999; Turlac, 2004a; Valuisky, 2000). Alexander Negrov, Miriam Charter (1997) and Evgeni V. Pavlov (2001) offer a helpful study of the question on whether there was any distinct Evangelical theology in Russia/U.S.S.R. Alexey A. Kolomiitsev sheds light upon disagreements between Evangelical Christians and Baptists over the issue of political participation in Russian public life (2012).

In 2008, Ukrainian scholar, Sergey Golovin, authored a monograph on 'Lost Dimension of Witness.' Using the results of extensive sociological questionnaires, Golovin analyses the spiritual awakening of the post-Soviet period.<sup>6</sup> However, there are no works related to a comparison of the two periods of 1920's and 1990's.

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<sup>5</sup> See PODBEREZSKY, I. V. 2000. Protestanty i drugie. Religioznaya publitsistika. Sbornik statey, St. Petersburg, Mirt; 2007. Khristianskoe soobshchestvo Rossi: kriticheskiy samoanaliz na fone dukhovnoy situatsii vremeni. Materialy kruglogo stola 27 aprelya 2007 g. Sbornik dokladov, Moscow, Assotsiatsiya Dukhovnoe vrozozhdenie; CHERENKOV, M. 2012. Baptizm bez kavychech. Ocherki i materialy k diskussii o budushchem evangel'skikh tserkvei, Cherkassy, Kollokvium; CHERENKOV, M. 2011. Forum 20. Dvadtsat' let religioznoy svobody i aktivnoy missii v postsovetskom obshchestve. Itogi, problemy, perspektivy evangel'skikh tserkvey. Materialy k diskussiyam, Kyiv, Dukh i litera.

<sup>6</sup> See GOLOVIN, S. 2008. Mirovozzrenie - utrachennoe izmerenie blagovestiya, Simferopol', DIAYPI.

### 1.3.3 Western Scholarship

Researchers outside the former Soviet Union showed a considerable interest in regard to the Evangelical movement in Russia. For some of them it was natural, since they themselves were Evangelical believers and cared about the life and ministry of believers in the former Soviet Union.

Heather Coleman's 'Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution 1905-1929' (Coleman, 2005) stands out among other works presented by Western authors. She used the concept of a spiritual revolution as an important slogan for the Evangelicals of the 1920's. In her well-documented monograph, she deals with the 1920 beginnings of persecution of Soviet Evangelicals.

Philip Boobbyer's monograph on 'Stalin's Era' (Boobbyer, 2000) offers a helpful historical background of the events taking place during the period before and after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.<sup>7</sup>

Walter Sawatsky, a leading expert in Russian/Soviet Evangelical history and missiology, undertook a substantial research project in 1981 on Soviet Evangelicals after World War II. The monograph offers important insights into theological nuances in Evangelical life in the U.S.S.R. Sawatsky, along with Peter Penner, also authored a book on 'Mission in the Former Soviet Union' (Penner, 2005), which analyses missional efforts of post-Soviet Evangelicals in the 1990s.

A book by Michael Rowe 'Russian Resurrection' (Rowe, 1994) presents an interesting perspective on questions related to spiritual awakening.<sup>8</sup> An article written by John White 'Three Periods of Awakening in Eastern Slavic Lands' (2013) was quite valuable for this thesis from the standpoint of methodology because it compared and contrasted the spiritual awakening in the former Soviet Union during three historical periods, including the 1990s.<sup>9</sup>

Mark Elliott (1993, 2003) and Kent Hill (1991) studied distinctly important issues in the life of Evangelicals during the Soviet/post-Soviet periods.

Two American sociologists Catherine Wanner (2007) and Esther Long (2005) are especially remarkable.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See BOOBBYER, P. 2000. *The Stalin Era*, London: Routledge.

<sup>8</sup> See ROWE, M. 1994. *Russian Resurrection*, London: Marshall Pickering.

<sup>9</sup> WHITE, J. 2013. Three Periods of Awakening in Eastern Slavic Lands. *Theological Reflections*. Special Issue of Donetsk Christian University: Bible, Theology, Church, 244-258.

<sup>10</sup> See WANNER, C. 2007. *Communities of the Converted. Ukrainians and Global Evangelism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press; LONG, E. G. 2005. *Identity in Evangelical Ukraine: Negotiating Regionalism, Nationalism and Transnationalism*. Ph.D., University of Kentucky.

Their sociological research was in contemporary Ukrainian Evangelical churches. The authors conceptualized aspects of inner religious culture of post-Soviet Evangelicals, and also global and transnational issues. Wanner and Long also studied the Western influence in the mission work of Ukrainian believers.

In summary, there is a fair amount of quality research on the Evangelical-Baptist movement in the former Soviet Union. Some of the research deals with an analysis of growth and development of the movement and its struggles during the years of persecution. However, there is very little attention given to periods in the Evangelical movement where those conditions were the most favourable for them.

## **1.4 Primary Sources**

Primary sources used in this thesis include archival documents, memoirs, articles from newspapers and interviews. Of great significance were the Archives of the AUCECB in Moscow, which house various manuscripts concerning the development of the Evangelical movement in Russia as well as state orders, which Russian authorities applied to religious organizations in the 1920s and 1990s.

Among the most important memoirs was the autobiography of Ivan S. Prokhanov (1933), which deals with the 1920s where he played a leading role, as well as memoirs of Arthur Mitskevich (1980). The diary of the Baptist leader, Vasiliy G. Pavlov (1917b), and his lecture on the separation of Church and state offered unique insights into Pavlov's idea of the spiritual reformation of Russia (1917c).

Primary sources from the 1920s period also include: the 1924 letter of Koloskov to the Soviet government (Koloskov, 1924), F. Oleshchuk's brochure 'Who are Sectarians?' (Oleshchuk, 1929), atheist publications from the journal *The Atheist* (1923) and *Antireligioznik* magazine (June 1927), and Pavel V. Pavlov's March 1917 paper on political demands of Baptists (1917a). Yakov Zhidkov's letter concerning women's role in churches is an excellent example of Russian Baptist attitudes toward women's leadership (Zhidkov, 1941).

In depth interviews were conducted with nineteen Evangelical leaders from the 1990s. Their ministry covers quite diverse regions and includes Russia, Ukraine and Moldova. They represent different ages. Some held leadership positions before the 1980s while others became leaders in the 1990s. The important part in the selection were leaders who were decision makers in their respective regions and structures or leading their congregation in decision making. These ministers offer insider's opinions on issues of growth and development of Evangelical churches in the former Soviet Union. Their answers are of a rather subjective and



personal nature, yet they are based upon a wealth of experience and participation in and observation of the ministry in a Soviet/Post-Soviet context. The interviews provide insights on their role in the leadership of the Church. What was the motivation? Where did they see the problems? How did they view the new freedom? How did the dissolution of the Soviet Union impact on them? How did their parishioners react in that time? What types of sermons were preached? What types of songs were sung? Since I conducted the interviews, many of the former leaders have died.

A Special Interview Questionnaire Form was developed, which included personal information about the interviewee and out-lined key questions. It also described specific circumstances related to the person interviewed (See Appendix A). Among those who were interviewed were Evangelicals of five different countries: namely, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Canada and the United States of America who had first-hand experience of Evangelical life in Russia/the Soviet Union. Seventeen interviewed Evangelicals spoke Russian while two churchmen spoke English (See Appendix C).

To provide the outsider's observation of Evangelical realities in the Russia/Soviet Union, the author interviewed Peter Beddow (interviewed on 17 February 2011), citizen of Great Britain and Canada who attended the 1994 Lillehammer Congress of the European Baptist Federation (EBF) and George Boltnew, Former President of the Russian-Ukrainian Baptist Union in the U.S.A. (interviewed on 10 June 2007) who also served as Special Assistant for the countries of the Former Soviet Union to the General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Denton Lotz. Boltnew, even though an outsider, offered valuable perspectives on the inner workings of Evangelical life in the former U.S.S.R. during the late 1980s–early 1990s, including Western efforts in the promotion of evangelism, outreach, and assistance to churches in the former U.S.S.R. in the 1990s; and changes that churches went through in the 1990s.

To better understand conditions of Evangelicals in the 1970s-1990s, two leading AUCECB figures were interviewed: Vasiliy Logvinenko, President Emeritus of the AUCECB (1985-1990) and Former President of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (1990-1994) (interviewed on 30 March 2007) and Alexei Bychkov, General Secretary of the AUCECB (1971-1990) and President of the EBF (1975-1977) (interviewed on 5 December 2006). Their insights on the state of the church at the time and after the collapse of the Soviet Union significantly contributed to the research.

Vitali Kulikov, former editor of *Bratskiy vestnik* (Fraternal Herald), the major publication of AUCECB and Associate Pastor of the Central Moscow Baptist Church, also

agreed to an interview (interviewed on 4 December 2006). Kulikov, in the 1960s, personally knew AUCECB General Secretary Alexander V. Karev (1894-1971). Kulikov was also familiar with the AUCECB and the Central Moscow Baptist Church, having served as the Chairman of its *Ispolorgan* for the Moscow Church. Additionally, he commented on the issue of Western involvement in evangelism in the 1990s and the establishment of Evangelical theological schools in Russia.

Ruvim Voloshin (interviewed on 2 November 2006) and Leonid Kartavenko (interviewed on 13 April 2007) both served as administrators in the RUECB in the 1990s. They belong to the generation of the late 1950s and early 1960s and are familiar with both the reality of persecution of the church in the Soviet Union and the situation of the church in the 1990s.

Evangelical ministers from different parts of Russia agreed to interviews, providing a valuable, first-hand picture of the life of churches in the 1990s. Pastors Victor Levashov (Northern Caucasus) (interviewed on 25 August 2007), Anatoly Redin (interviewed on 7 December 2006), Pavel Zhironov from Ryazan Oblast (interviewed on 31 March 2006), and Yakov Franchuk (Russian Far East) (interviewed on 15 August 2006) discussed church life in Russia before and after the collapse of the U.S.S.R.

Sergey Savinsky, who currently resides in Spokane, Washington, U.S.A., is the author of three monographs on the history of the movement in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus (interviewed on 16 January 2007). He offered insights on AUCECB history, the life of churches in Russia in the 1990s, as well as Slavic Christian emigration. Reverend Savinsky also provided insights in his response to questionnaire B.

Victor Loginov, Bishop (President) of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptist Churches in Moldavia (1992-1994) (interviewed on 7 March 2006) and Ion Rotaru, Pastor of Jesus Our Saviour<sup>11</sup> Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church in Kishinev<sup>12</sup>, Moldova (interviewed on 19 April 2009), addressed in interviews the situation of churches in this former Soviet republic. Piotr Zeona, former Pastor of Chernovtsy Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church, Ukraine (interviewed on 20 March 2006), commented on the (1) influence of traditions and offered examples of and (2) 'fortress mentality', developed in churches in Ukraine before the collapse of the U.S.S.R.

Besides using interviews with prominent Evangelicals leaders, I offer my own personal observations since I was born in the Soviet Union and lived in the Soviet context (namely in

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<sup>11</sup> "Isus Salvatorul" in Romanian.

<sup>12</sup> 'Chisinau' in Romanian.

Moldovian Soviet Socialist Republic<sup>13</sup>) for more than twenty years. After emigrating to the U.S.A. in 1990, the next twenty years were served as pastor of the Wonderful News (Rus. *Radostnaya vest'*) Slavic Evangelical Church, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., which consisted primarily of different streams of emigrants from the former Soviet Union. I also serve as President of Russian Missions, a Christian non-profit organisation whose primary purpose is to reach the Russian-speaking population in the former U.S.S.R. Ministry experience among Slavic emigrants and missionary travels to the former U.S.S.R led to observations and certain questions regarding the response of Evangelical churches of the 1990s to the opportunities offered by the period of freedom following the collapse of the U.S.S.R.

## 1.5 Methodology

This thesis represents an interdisciplinary research, which uses methods from different research fields: Church and State, history, missiology, cultural and religious studies. The most important methodological question for this study is what is the basis for comparison of two seemingly different, but also remarkably similar periods? To help identify fundamental similarities of the 1920s and 1990s the concept of Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka (Sztompka, 2000)<sup>14</sup>, which deals with change and cultural trauma was applied. 'Trauma' is a medical term, which can be appropriately used as a metaphor and applied in social studies. Sztompka provides the following definition of trauma:

Trauma would indicate a specific pathology of the agency. 'Agency' is of course a concept with multiple meanings, but in the theory of social becoming it is understood as a complex, synthetic quality of human collectivity allowing for its creative self-transformation. (Sztompka, 2000, p. 452) ... The conditions for cultural trauma are ripe when there appears some kind of disorganisation, displacement, or incoherence in culture – in other words, when the normative and cognitive content of human life and social action loses its homogeneity, coherence, and stability, and becomes diversified or even polarised into opposite cultural complexes. Looking at it from the perspective of the actors, we may speak of cultural disorientation... Disorientation results here from a clash of new life with an old culture (Sztompka, 2000, pp. 453, 455).

In the overview of the two periods of the 1920s and 1990s, it becomes apparent that in both cases there are issues of drastic cultural disorientation that are caused by far-reaching political and social transformations. In both cases, changes of a lifestyle (*habitus*) take place because of changes of political regime. Each case represents a clash between the lifestyle and values that existed before the change and that were imposed after. What is important for this

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<sup>13</sup> Also referred to as 'Moldova', 'Moldavia' or 'Republic of Moldova.' Not to be confused with one of the regions of Romania.

<sup>14</sup> See SZTOMPKA, P. 2000. Cultural Trauma. The Other Face of Social Change. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 3, 449-466.

study is to investigate how these changes influenced the lives of believers and the overall development of church life.

From a methodological point of view, strategies were used as a response and adaptation to conditions caused by cultural trauma. The main types of such strategies are based upon Sztompka's research. Sztompka, in turn, utilizes the research of other authors, such as T. Merton's description of four typical adaptations to anomie: innovation, rebellion, ritualism and retreatism (Sztompka, 2000, p. 461). Based upon Merton's research, Sztompka (Sztompka, 2004) argues that ways of adaptation to cultural trauma can be either active and constructive or passive.<sup>15</sup>

This study attempts to research how the direct result of cultural trauma impacted on the activity of Russian Evangelicals in the 1920s and 1990s. However, it is assumed that in each case, traumatic events had a different nature and offered different strategies for adaptation and decision-making. What was a dominant strategy of coping with cultural trauma in the 1920s and 1990s? Was it active and constructive innovation in its nature or it might be characterized as marked by retreatism and ritualism?

It is important to point out that Sztompka's research was the phenomenon of cultural trauma using the example of post-Soviet Poland. Thus, the methodology and analysis of different social groups going through social change during a concrete historical period was tested using Sztompka's research. In this thesis, the attempt was made to show how a distinct religious group, in this case Russian Evangelicals, lived through and attempted to deal with cultural trauma in conditions of drastic social changes.

## **1.6 New Knowledge and the Contribution of this Thesis**

In this research an innovative approach to comparative historical studies was applied utilizing the main principles of Sztompka's methodology. It is the first time these principles were applied in a study of Evangelical Christians in that part of the world. The thesis offers a study of the two distinct but also remarkably similar periods of the Evangelical movement in Russia (1920s and 1990s) where both were filled with dramatic historical changes. It places them within the proper historical context and offers a comparison of personalities of Evangelical leaders, their vision of transformation of Russia and the outcome of their attempts to reach Russians. A comparison of the two decisive periods in the history of the Evangelical movement in Russia/U.S.S.R. offers an opportunity for studying the development of a Christian community during the decades of social changes. It provides an explanation for the

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<sup>15</sup> See SZTOMPKA, P. 2004. The Trauma of Social Change. A Case of Postcommunist Societies. In: JEFFREY C. ALEXANDER, E. A. (ed.) *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

dramatic growth of numbers of believers and character traits of the inner life of Evangelicals as a whole. By comparing the Evangelical movement in the 1920s and 1990s, the goal of this research aims to assess how effectively Russian Protestants used historical opportunities to spiritually transform Russia during the two periods under study.

The concept of ‘cultural trauma’ is used to analyse the Christian Evangelical movement for the first time. It explains how and why certain historical and cultural distinctions took place during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

New knowledge is expressed in the analysis of newly found primary sources, which were first used in this thesis. This relates to a number of documents, which offer insights into the life of Evangelicals during the post-Soviet period. These documents became available very recently and were not studied before.

A number of Evangelical leaders were specifically interviewed for the purpose of this study. Interviews offer a unique assessment of historical circumstances and factors that influenced the church of the 1990s by church leaders in the former Soviet Union and the Slavic diaspora in the West.

The practical results of research are significant. The thesis can be used by post-Soviet Evangelicals to substantiate the study of their roots in order to shape the strategy of their work in influencing society in the years to come.

## **1.7 Design of this Thesis: Brief Outline of the Contents of Chapters**

This thesis consists of six chapters, a bibliography and appendices. The first chapter (Introduction) deals with the need and purpose of research undertaken. It offers an analysis of the bibliography and primary sources, and a description of research methodology and a new contribution to scientific research.

The second chapter, entitled ‘Evangelical Christian and Baptist Movements in Russia from their Beginnings in 1860 up to the First Decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’ analyses the foundational sources of the Evangelical movement in the Russian Empire and factors that led to its dynamic development in the 1920s.

The third chapter is entitled ‘Evangelicals in the U.S.S.R. in the 1920s.’ It analyses the 1920s, namely the development of the Evangelical movement in the context of events that followed the revolution of 1917 and the building of the new Soviet society. Special emphasis is placed upon how Evangelicals responded to challenges of the time, namely changes in political ideology, social environment and trauma.

The fourth chapter ‘Evangelicals in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet States at the End of the 1980s–1990s,’ concentrates upon the decade of 1990s. It includes a condensed analysis

of the Soviet period of life in the Evangelical movement. The aim is to highlight the main characteristics of changes, which believers experienced during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The fifth chapter entitled ‘Comparison of the Evangelical Movement in the 1920s and 1990s’ represents a comparative study of the two periods with the purpose of analysing distinct traits of cultural trauma as applied to both periods and how the reaction of Evangelicals to cultural trauma differed in the 1920s and 1990s.

Chapter six offers concluding remarks and a summary of results.

## **CHAPTER TWO: EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN AND BAPTIST MOVEMENTS IN RUSSIA FROM THEIR BEGINNING IN THE 1860s TO THE FIRST TWO DECADES OF THE 20TH CENTURY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the evangelical and Baptist Christians of the Russian Empire from their beginning in the 1860s to the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Particular attention will be given to the conditions under which the evangelical movement started and what factors impacted and influenced its formation as a separate community.

The evangelical movement started as two separate communities – Evangelical-Christians and Baptists. This formation took place almost simultaneously; however, in different regions of the Russian Empire. Because of their common goals, they eventually consolidated into one union and one community.

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Russia was a period of long and wide-ranging revolutionary events. They directly touched upon the life of the evangelical Baptist community and impacted its development for many years ahead.

Special attention will be given in this chapter to the development of the term 'Spiritual Revolution' during this revolutionary time because it impacted the future attitudes of the evangelicals toward the external world.

This chapter will show that in the first decades of the existence of the evangelical community on the territories of Russian Empire three key aspects significantly affected Russian Protestant life in 1920s and 1990s, namely: the Church and State relationship, cultural adaptation into the orthodox environment and the development of church structures.

### **2.2 The Beginnings of the Evangelical and Baptist Movements**

It should be kept in mind that the initiation of the evangelical movement took place under the Russian Empire. In that country the leading position of the Russian Orthodox Church was ensured as the main spiritual institution supporting the Empire. Several important social, economic, and cultural factors contributed to the initiation of the evangelical movement.

### **2.2.1 Factors that Contributed to the Formation of the Evangelical-Christians and Baptist Movements in Russia**

The Russian church historian, Savinsky, identifies four factors that influenced and contributed to the emergence of the Evangelical-Christians and Baptist movements (Savinsky, 1999). First, the formation of the Russian Bible Society and translation of the New Testament into contemporary Russian in 1822 contributed to the emergence and development of the Evangelical movement (1972). The availability of the Scriptures in the native language as opposed to Old Church Slavonic, prompted many people to read the Bible in a search for truth (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 30-31). *Knigonoshi* (Bible distributors) Yakov Delyakov, Otto Forhgamer, John Melville, and Sintikhiya Filippova made sure that thousands of Russians had their own copy of the Bible (Savinsky, 1999). As peasants, workers, and nobility read the Gospels, they clearly saw biblical imperatives that called them to a holy life and an abandonment of drunkenness and other vices (Savinsky, 1999).

Second, the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and the greater freedom given to peasants prompted them to think about life in a new way. At precisely the time of reform, communities of Protestant believers emerged in Nikolayevka, Lyubomirka, and other locations in the Ukraine. After the reform, peasants routinely gathered together to read the Bible which, in turn, led to the transformation of many lives through a conversion experience (Savinsky, 1999).

Third, some Russian Orthodox believers considered priests to be pompous and overbearing and questioned church rituals which, as they believed, were mixed with popular superstitions. Dissatisfied believers sought a deeper meaning of faith. The Russian Orthodox Church, closely aligned with the hated Russian government, lost its moral authority in the minds of many peasants and workers who resented what they saw as the corruption, drunkenness, and wasteful spending of government officials and clergy (Savinsky, 1999).

Fourth, foreign missionaries who came to St. Petersburg, Ukraine, and Tiflis influenced the emergence of the two movements (Savinsky, 1999). Vasiliy Pavlov, Vasiliy Ivanov-Klyshnikov, Johannes Pritzkau, Abram Unger, Johannes Viler, Johannes Onken, Martin Kal'veyt, August Liebig, and others are to be credited with influencing the worship and spiritual life of newly emerging churches (Pavlov, 1911). Lord Radstock from England was the catalyst of revival among the nobility in St. Petersburg.



### 2.2.2 The Emergence of the Evangelical-Christians Movement

St. Petersburg came to be the heart of the Evangelical Christian movement in Russia. The Evangelical revival first emerged among St. Petersburg aristocracy who were not satisfied with the scepticism, unbelief, and lack of meaning they perceived in secular life and social life. In the second half of the nineteenth century many Russian nobles were searching for meaning in their lives, looking to satisfy the spiritual hunger that was burning within them.

It was the English aristocratic evangelist, Lord Radstock, who triggered a spiritual revival among St. Petersburg nobility. A firsthand observer of fighting during the Crimean War (1854–1856), he underwent a conversion experience because of illness and joined the Free Church founded by John Nelson Darby. He preached in a number of European cities before coming to St. Petersburg in 1874, at the invitation of Elizaveta Chertkova (Mitskevich, 2007). Chertkova, her sister Alexandra Pashkova, Countess Natalya Liven, and her sister Vera Gagarina underwent conversion experiences as a result of Radstock's preaching. Count Modest Korf, Colonel Vasiliy Pashkov, and Count Alexei Bobrinsky soon followed. Pashkov was especially touched by Radstock's prayers, although he initially resisted even attending the evangelist's meetings (Mitskevich, 2007).

These three men decided to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout Russia. When Radstock was forced to leave Russia in 1878, homes of Russian nobility continued to be places for Christian worship (Friesen, 2006, p. 104). These gatherings were open to common people – students, factory workers, and peasants, as well as aristocrats, many of whom experienced an evangelical conversion.

Madame Chertkova soon started visiting prisons while Pashkova and Gagarina organized tailoring shops and laundries for poor women. Vasiliy Pashkov started a soup kitchen for students and poor workers. One convert, Yulia Zasetskaya, founded a homeless shelter in St. Petersburg. This group founded the Society for the Encouragement of Spiritual and Moral Instruction (Mitskevich, 2007). Maria Peyker and her daughter Alexandra founded an evangelical magazine, the *Russian Worker*. The society published more than 200 titles, which it distributed across many Russian provinces. Pashkov, Bobrinsky, and others travelled widely throughout Russia, preaching the Bible (Mitskevich, 2007). Koval'kov writes about Friedrich W. Baedeker's, Vasiliy Alexandrovich Pashkov's, and Ivan Veniaminovich

Kargel's<sup>16</sup> visits to Moscow in 1882 to preach the Gospel to the group of believers gathered in Lopatin's home (Koval'kov, 1970).

The church in St. Petersburg did not have any particular structure with pastors and committees. While Pashkov was in charge, equality was the rule among members. (2011a) Open communion was observed (like followers of Darby). The majority of converts held to infant baptism. However, in 1883, George Muller from Bristol, England, arrived in St. Petersburg to administer a believer's baptism to Vasiliy Pashkov, Natalya Liven, and the tutor of her children, Madame Klasovskaya.

### **2.2.3 The Beginning of Baptist Movement in the Russian Empire**

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Baptist movement developed in two regions of the Russian Empire: the Trans Caucasus and Southern Ukraine. Baptists in Tavricheskaya Guberniya in Ukraine came out of the Stundist (from German *Stunde* – hour of Bible study) movement, which spread among peasants (Mel'gunov, 1904, p. 1). The Evangelists Mikhail Ratushny, Ivan Ryaboshapka, and Feodor Onishchenko contributed toward the emergence of the Baptist movement in Ukraine.

Stundists were German colonists who had lived in Southern Ukraine since the 1820s. Many of them belonged to the Mennonite, Lutheran, and Reformed churches (Sinichkin, 2011c). Revival came to the Germans in 1824 through the preaching of Johann Bonekemper in Ukraine and Edward Vust. The result was the establishment of Stundist churches. Some Ukrainians, dissatisfied with the teachings of the Orthodox Church, were willing to explore new ways and therefore began to attend Stundist gatherings and began converting to the evangelical faith. Some, like Ryaboshapka, not having the Scriptures in their own language, learned German in order to be able to read the Bible.

At first, Ukrainian Stundists continued to attend Orthodox Church liturgies and accepted church registration of marriages, deaths, and births. However, as the Orthodox Church started to persecute them and take away their copies of the Bible, they stopped frequenting Orthodox services.

In the Trans Caucasus, Baptists came out of the Molokan movement. Baptists emerged as a direct result of the publication of the New Testament in Russian in 1822, followed by the

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<sup>16</sup> G.L. Nichols (2011) offers a biographical study on Ivan V. Kargel.

printing of the Synodal Translation of the whole Bible in 1876. Scholars consider Nikita Voronin (1840–1905) to be the first Russian Baptist (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 30). Through the reading of the New Testament, Voronin realised the necessity of conversion and a believer's baptism. Martin Kal'veyt baptised Voronin in the Kura River in the city of Tiflis (Tbilisi, contemporary Republic of Georgia). The year 1867, and date of Voronin's baptism, is widely regarded as the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian Baptist movement.

Voronin preached about God's love in Molokan churches. Later these congregations started calling themselves Christians that accepted a believer's baptism. About ten years later, they adopted the term Baptist like believers in Germany. Merchants, artisans, and peasants were members of the first Baptist churches in the Trans Caucasus and Southern Ukraine.

Vasiliy Pavlov (1854–1924), the driving force of the Russian Baptist movement, came to the church in Tiflis in 1871 when he was only 17 years old. Vasiliy Ivanov-Klyshnikov, Egor Bogdanov, Andrei Mazaev, and Semyon Rodionov also became preachers in the Tiflis church. In 1875, Pavlov left for Germany to study at Hamburg Theological Seminary. Because of his remarkable talent for learning languages (he knew German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew) the Tiflis Baptist Church selected him to receive theological training as well as to learn more about the structure and governance of German Baptist churches. In 1876, Johannes Onken, head of the Hamburg Seminary, ordained Pavlov to missionary service. Pavlov translated and edited the Hamburg Baptist Confession of Faith used by the church in Tiflis.

The Tiflis Baptist Church, which elected its first church council in 1877, appointed Pavlov as pastor in 1879. For a long time this church served as an organizational model for Baptist life. The congregation kept minutes of the meetings and people's participation which testify to the lively interest of members in the life of the congregation.

The missionary activity of Vasiliy Pavlov, Egor Bogdanov, and Vasiliy Ivanov-Klyshnikov resulted in the planting of several new churches in the Trans Caucasus. In 1880, Ivan Kargel from St. Petersburg visited the church in Tiflis (Nichols, 2011, p. 123). For nearly 20 years, churches in the Trans Caucasus enjoyed relative freedom granted by the government and tolerance on the part of the Orthodox Church. In 1880, Pavlov and Voronin made contact by visiting Baptist congregations in Southern Ukraine.

## 2.3 Persecutions and Resistance of Russian Evangelicals

Evangelicals experienced harsh persecution between 1882 and 1905 while Konstantin Pobedonostsev (Byrnes, 1968)<sup>17</sup> was in charge of religious affairs in Russia as the Oberprokurator of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church (Mitskevich, 2007). Savinsky calls it ‘the dark period in the history of Russian-Ukrainian Evangelical movement’ (Savinsky, 1999). The period of 1894–1896 is considered one of the strongest persecutions of Evangelicals in the country. (2011a) The Resolution of the Holy Synod issued in 1891 states: ‘Rapid growth of sects poses a grave threat for the state. Sectarians are to be prohibited places of their dwelling. Their life is to be made unbearable. Their children are to be taken away from them and raised in the spirit and teaching of Russian Orthodoxy’ (Mitrokhin, 2008).<sup>18</sup>

The Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church were united in their intention to persecute ‘sectarians,’ as they called all dissenting Christian groups who did not belong to the Orthodox Church. The state-appointed *Oberprokurator* was in charge of the affairs of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church since 1721 when Peter the Great abolished the patriarchate. This ‘symphony’ between church and state amounted to state control over church affairs. As *Oberprokurator* of the Holy Synod, Konstantin Pobedonostsev was intent on guarding the monarchy against any signs of unrest, freethinking, or pluralism in Russian society. He had tremendous influence with Alexander III and Nicholas II and therefore almost free rein over the affairs of the church. Pobedonostsev set as one of his major tasks ‘the breaking of the backbone of Russian Stundism’ (Savinsky, 1999).

### 2.3.1 The 'Moscow Edict' of 1879 and Persecution under Pobedonostsev

Even though Russian Evangelicals were formally protected by the ‘Moscow Edict’ of 27 March 1879, also called *Moskovskiy tsirkulyar* which listed a number of stipulations related to their relationship with the Russian State, it was not duly enforced in the Russian provinces. Local authorities ignored it and chose to follow the lead of local Orthodox clergy, which exhibited a negative attitude toward Evangelicals. According to the edict, Evangelicals, among other things, had a right to register births, marriages, and deaths with the state.

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<sup>17</sup> Robert F. Byrnes (1968) offers an extensive study of life of Konstantin Pobedonostsev.

<sup>18</sup> On the subject see also, Savinsky, *Istoriya evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov Ukrainy, Rossiyi, Belorussii (1867-1917)* [History of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Ukraine, Russia and Belorussia (1867-1917)], Tatyana Nikol'skaya, *Russkiy Protestantizm i gosudarstvennaya vlast' v 1905–1991 godakh* [Russian Protestantism and State Power 1905–1991] and Lev Mitrokhin, *Filosofskiye problemy religiovedeniya* [Philosophical Problems of the Study of Religion].

In 1882, Pobedonostsev issued an amendment to the Moscow Edict, which stated that it did not apply to Russian Evangelicals, but only to foreigners or Russians who had converted to the evangelical faith from other religious denominations, pending the permission granted by the Russian government (Byrnes, 1968, p. 123). This amendment was used to unleash persecutions against Evangelicals. Pobedonostsev considered Pashkov and his St. Petersburg followers to be 'dangerous elements' and therefore initiated police surveillance to monitor their activities. He issued Pashkov a prohibition against holding worship services in St. Petersburg and was in favour of expelling Lord Radstock from Russia (Mitskevich, 2007); (Savinsky, 1999).

In 1883, the government issued a second amendment to the edict, prohibiting missionary activity of Pashkovites, Baptists, and Stundists among the Orthodox Church in Russia (Mitskevich, 2007). Police closed Pashkov's society and confiscated all its literature and expelled Pashkov, Bobrinsky, and Korf from Russia. In spite of the harsh treatment of Pashkov and other nobility, the government showed leniency toward two widows, Liven and Chertkova. They cautiously continued to hold regular services in their homes. In the absence of Pashkov, Korf, and Bobrinsky, Liven and Chertkova took charge of worship services while Ivan Kargel and Friedrich Baedeker, a citizen of Turkey, delivered sermons (Savinsky, 1999).

When persecutions intensified, Evangelicals in St. Petersburg held services in the basements of believers' homes where they quietly listened to sermons and shared the Lord's Supper. They could not sing hymns for fear of being discovered by the police (Savinsky, 1999). In cases of believers' arrests, Ivan S. Prokhanov and Ivan P. Kushnerev did everything to find lawyers to defend them. Prokhanov stated that Baptists were not to be confused with Stundists, a generic name that was used to identify all Russian non-Orthodox 'sectarians' (Mitskevich, 2007).

Beginning in the 1880s, the Orthodox Church organised a missionary movement to counter Evangelical missionary efforts in Russia. Several congresses took place in Moscow to discuss Orthodox strategic initiatives against the outreach of Evangelicals (Mitrokhin, 2008). The essence of Orthodox efforts was to use all means available to disrupt Russian Evangelical worship services and to prevent conversions of Russian Orthodox believers to the Baptist faith.

Pobedonostsev's persecution of Ukrainian Evangelicals was especially harsh (Byrnes, 1968, p. 212). They were fined for holding worship services and forced to perform

community work. In 1885, Pobedonostsev exiled Ivan Ryaboshapka, Mikhail Ratushny, and several other believers for proselytizing the Orthodox. Ukrainian Baptists, forcefully taken out of church buildings, suffered beatings and were made to stand for hours in the freezing cold. Angry mobs destroyed Baptist church buildings. In spite of harsh persecutions, the number of Baptists in Ukraine grew from 2,006 in 1884 to 4,670 in 1893 (Savinsky, 1999).

The persecution of Baptists in Tiflis and the Trans Caucasus began under the leadership of Pavel, patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church from the mid-1880s. Baptist ministers from Tiflis had their registration and church seal taken away from them. The Orthodox accused them of aiding 'Ukrainian Stundists.' Accused of being a dangerous sect with a negative influence on society, the Baptists were banned from holding worship services.

In March 1887, Vasiliy Pavlov and Nikita Voronin were jailed in Tiflis and later that year sentenced to four years of exile in Orenburg. Upon Pavlov's return to Tiflis, he had to sign a document which prohibited him from preaching in Baptist churches, which he refused to do. During a second exile in Orenburg in 1892, he lost his wife, two daughters, and a younger son.

### **2.3.2 Russian Evangelicals Attempt to Organise Their Work**

Even though German Mennonites and Latvian and German Baptists in Russia had protected rights under the Moscow Edict, that was not the case with Evangelicals of Russian origin (Mitskevich, 2007). The first Baptist conference took place in Tiflis in 1879. It established the Baptist Mission Board comprised of Nikita Voronin, M. Kal'veyt, and Vasiliy Pavlov.

In 1882, the conference of Baptists and Mennonites in Ryukenu saw wider representation of believers from Tiflis, Danzig, Odessa, and St. Petersburg. One of the major issues discussed at the conference was missionary activity in Russia. The conference appointed missionaries who were to spread the Gospel throughout Russia (Savinsky, 1999).

Pashkov's letter to the conference, discussed in much detail, asked Baptists to let believers from St. Petersburg participate in the Lord's Supper, even though some of them still held to the doctrine of infant baptism. The delegates did not resolve this issue. During the period of persecutions, Baptists managed to conduct six 'illegal' congresses in different parts of Russia. Discussed at these congresses were matters of Baptist life, missionary activity, and policy.

The first united congress of Pashkovites, Baptists, and other non-Orthodox Christians took place in St. Petersburg in April 1884. More than 100 delegates from churches in Russia came to the congress. Its purpose was to find a common goal and unite in reaching Russia for Christ. According to Korf, that was the first serious attempt by Pashkov to unite all Evangelical believers in Russia (Savinsky, 1999, p. 196). In their letter to churches, Pashkov and Korf emphasized the unity of the body of Christ, citing Jesus' prayer of John 17:21. 'That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me' (Savinsky, 2011, p. 53).

On 6 April 1884, the police arrested and interrogated many of the delegates. They had to leave St. Petersburg under the accusation that they belonged to the movement of nihilists and were organizing a revolution against the monarchy.

### **2.3.3 Evangelical Christians and Baptists, 1905–1916**

Since the early 1900s, Russia was in turmoil. As a result of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 and the Revolution of 1905–07 its resources were exhausted. This contributed to general unrest in society. In 1905, Konstantin Pobedonostsev retired from his position as *Oberprokurator* of the Holy Synod, which brought some relief to Russian Evangelicals. On 17 October 1905, Nicholas II released the Manifesto of Freedom of Conscience, Speech, Assemblies and Unions, aimed at the protection of minority religions. Prokhanov and other leaders of Evangelical Christians contributed their proposals to the document (Mitskevich, 2007).

Right after the publication of the Manifesto, Prokhanov and St. Petersburg believers held a worship service, during which they thanked God for the dawn of freedom in Russia. Dozens of imprisoned believers returned to their homes (Nikol'skaya, 2009). In April 1905, Prokhanov and the Union of Evangelical Christians held the first youth conference (Mitskevich, 2007).

In the first decade of the twentieth century, international Christian organizations helped supply Bibles to Russian Evangelicals. According to the statistics of the British and Foreign Bible Society (1913), it sent nearly 570,000 Bibles and New Testaments into the Russian Empire (1913).

In spite of freedoms granted by the monarchical Manifesto, thousands of Evangelicals remained in prisons. Local authorities were not in a rush to release them and were often

ignored by the Russian provincial authorities. In addition to this, the monarchy did not issue any regulations concerning the release of prisoners of conscience (Mitskevich, 2007). The police sometimes disrupted the worship services of newly emerged congregations, as was the case in St. Petersburg and Kronstadt. In 1908, Russian police forced the closure of all Evangelical Christian churches (known as Pashkovites) in St. Petersburg. However, protests by believers and the personal interference of Pyotr Stolypin resulted in the reopening of many churches.

The persecution of Evangelicals in the Russian provinces continued. Local authorities with the blessing of Orthodox priests initiated them. Dozens of Orthodox missionaries dispatched all over the country opposed the efforts of Evangelicals to convert ‘the faithful’ (Nikol'skaya, 2009). Many Evangelicals were confused. They realized that though on paper they were granted freedom by the monarchy, real life was very different (Mitskevich, 2007).

The years 1905–1916 brought only limited freedom for Russian Evangelicals. In spite of this, persecutions brought Russian Evangelicals closer together as they decided to uphold their fight for freedom. In December 1906, Evangelicals held a joint congress in Kiev, which appealed to the government for rights of local churches and made it known that they were against the state interference in church affairs (Mitskevich, 2007).

In January 1907, more than 70 delegates from Baptist, Evangelical Christian, Presbyterian, and *Molokan* churches gathered in St. Petersburg for another joint congress, which was chaired by Ivan Kargel. According to Arthur Mitskevich, participants in the congress often spoke about the idea of unification, since Russia needed a strong and united Evangelical movement (Mitskevich, 2007).

Prokhanov was the driving engine of unification of all Evangelicals in Russia. A talented organizer himself, he initiated a reorganisation of the structure of St. Petersburg Evangelical Christian churches and unification of all Evangelical Christians into an All-Russian Union of Evangelical Christians. In 1907, he organized short-term courses for training Evangelical preachers (Nikol'skaya, 2009).

## **2.4 February Revolution of 1917 and the Evangelical Idea of Spiritual Revolution**

The first main development that took place during 1917 involves changes in society. This chapter is important in the coming evaluation of the overall work of the Russian Evangelical movement of the 1920s and the same movement of the 1990s. In the 1990s, there



was a dramatic change in society, which affected the Evangelicals as well. This impact included important issues in the Church – state relations, speeches that Russian Evangelical leaders made regarding the situation of 1917, relationships between regional Evangelical unions and the Russian Orthodox Church, and their missional and political activities during that time.

The year 1917 is of great significance to Russian Evangelical history because Evangelicals expressed their views publicly, and tried to influence the country's politics. The seven months between the February Revolution of 1917 and the Socialist Revolution that took place in October of 1917 in the history of the Russian Evangelicals are often called 'the beginning of the Golden Age of the movement.'

In 1917, the Evangelical movement was young, yet important enough to receive the attention of those in power, which was documented in various publications from that period. It is also worthy to note that Ivan Prokhanov, one of the leaders of the Russian Evangelical movement, played an important role in the movement. President of the Russian-American Institute in Moscow, John Bernbaum, recognized that Prokhanov was an eyewitness of a period of history that saw the end of the Romanov dynasty, the agony of World War I, the revolution of 1917, and the formation of the U.S.S.R. by the Bolsheviks. According to Bernbaum, Prokhanov's life offers insights into the struggles of the Russian Evangelicals under the monarchy and Communist Party rule (Bernbaum, 1996).

Prokhanov believed in the idea of a Russian spiritual revolution. He stated, 'No social or political reforms could prove successful unless a moral and spiritual reform in the people themselves was first realized.' He was the catalyst of the movement's engagement in political and social life in Russia in 1917. Bernbaum wrote: 'Prokhanov's life is an amazing example of a man committed to his faith, a man willing to suffer imprisonment for his beliefs, while remaining deeply committed to his country, despite persecution by both tsarist and Bolshevik governments' (Bernbaum, 1996).

Prokhanov was a visionary who wanted to leave a certain heritage in the form of minutes, correspondence, publications for the future generations, so that they would know what took place during that time. This is the period of the movement during which Russian Evangelicals were trying to participate in the new vision for the new country.

During February–March 1917, the Russian tsarist regime that ruled the country for many centuries collapsed. The country was involved in the war that was taking its toll on the Russian population. Paul Dowswell indicated:

Ordinary Russians may have flocked to defend their homeland when the war broke out, but the course of the war made the Russian Revolution almost inevitable. For the Tsar's regime one disaster followed another; Nicholas' conduct following the Khodynka tragedy, his inflexibility and that of his despised German wife, the 'Bloody Sunday' massacre at the Winter Palace in 1905, the scandal of Rasputin, and finally the horror of World War I. With equipment in short supply, some soldiers were sent into battle without boots or rifles (they were expected to pick up a gun from a fallen comrade) ... Before the war was a year old, Russia had suffered 4 million casualties and the German army had advanced 280 miles (450 kilometres) into Russian territory. Millions of civilians had become refugees, and the threat of famine loomed over the empire (Dowswell, 2004, p.20).

Russian citizens brought about the collapse of the monarchy. They expressed dissatisfaction with the way the government was handling current affairs in the country. A number of massive general strikes paralysed Russia. Many imperial institutions were no longer able to support the monarchy. Summarizing the causes of February Revolution of 1917, Robert Service wrote:

At the end of February 1917 the political eruption took place that Lenin had long predicted. Revolution came to Petrograd. Industrial strikes had been occurring for some days, starting with action by women textile workers. The trouble had quickly spread to the labour-force of the Putilov metallurgical plant and the police proved incapable of keeping control ... The popular mood was implacable. Workers were aggrieved by the deteriorating conditions in the factories and by the food shortages (Service, 2009a, p.351).

In February 1917, Tsar Nicholas II resigned from the throne. This ended the reign of the Romanov family over the Russian Empire. This event is known in Russia as 'the February Revolution of 1917.' Geoffrey Hosking calls the year 1917 'the great simplifier:'

[Year 1917] stripped away all the multi-layered accretions of the 'sedimentary society', sweeping aside estate, class and ethnos, and leaving a stark confrontation: Whites versus Reds. Neutrality between them was impossible. Even though neither was fighting to restore the old autocratic empire, their visions of Russia were incompatible. The Whites took the policies of the Russifiers to their logical conclusion, envisaging a state dominated by ethnic Russians ... The Reds' crusade was for a socialist order, a workers' and peasants' state which would be the harbinger of 'proletarian internationalism' (Hosking, 2011, p. 453).

#### **2.4.1 Prokhanov's Response to the February Revolution of 1917**

During the events of the February Revolution of 1917, Ivan Prokhanov lived close to the headquarters of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in St. Petersburg. He had eyewitness experience to the main current events that took place in St. Petersburg: the murders and imprisonment of many citizens. According to him, noise from shots fired could be heard everywhere. Prokhanov writes, 'I saw the bodies of dead soldiers and people on the streets. I witnessed the move of soldiers and artillery to the building of Russian Duma' (Prokhanov, 1933, p. 169).

Prokhanov had mixed feelings about the February Revolution, which is evident in his autobiography (Prokhanov, 1933, p.169). He looked at the revolution as a two-edged sword. In one sense, it created some possibilities of freedom. On the other hand, it brought about some difficulties. He further saw great enthusiasm in the people who were welcoming this revolution and especially because it did not bring with it a lot of bloodshed. He recalled the example of the French Revolution and other revolutions. According to Prokhanov, even though this revolution was peaceful at the beginning, later on it led to much terror and bloodshed. He believed that if revolution did not go through extremism, it would not develop deep roots. To lead to true freedom, revolution must go through a very difficult and problematic time of suffering. Prokhanov felt despair. At the same time, he viewed the situation as a normal process that one needs to go through. He believed suffering to be a prelude to the dawn of true freedom in Russia (Prokhanov, 1933, p. 170).

Even though Prokhanov had mixed feelings about what was going to happen, Evangelical Christians very quickly started to feel the social and spiritual void and responded as a church to this new opportunity. Right at the beginning of 1917, when the political situation was unstable, Evangelical leaders tried to influence society and the Provisional Government.<sup>19</sup> The Evangelical church in St. Petersburg submitted a petition that included the signatures of Ivan Prokhanov and the church clerk Yakov Zhidkov<sup>20</sup>. It included congratulations to the new Provisional Government on the occasion of the revolution, and then went on to request total freedom of religion, the press, gatherings, unions, and preaching the Gospel. The Evangelicals also asked to reopen their churches (Rus. *Doma molitvy*) as well as to grant freedom for publishing brochures, magazines and newspapers previously restricted by the Tsarist government (Mitskevich, 1980, p. 2). In addition to the petition sent to the Provisional Government, the Evangelicals sent a letter to churches requesting constant prayer for freedom and the release of their brothers in Christ from prison.

During the revolution, Evangelical Christians were without a central office. Many churches remained closed due to earlier persecutions. Many leaders of the Evangelical movement were still in prisons and exile. At the time, the St. Petersburg Evangelical Christian Church assumed leadership for the whole movement in the country. St. Petersburg

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<sup>19</sup> The Russian Duma put together a so-called 'Provisional Government' (Rus. *Vremennoye pravitel'stvo*) that was supposed to run the affairs in the country and implement reforms. They created an assembly that was to design the new Russian Constitution.

<sup>20</sup> Yakov Zhidkov later served as President (Chairman) of the All-Union Council of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists until his death in 1966.

Protestants sent letters to imprisoned Christians in different parts of Russia. In the correspondence, the church wrote about freedom and the desired release of prisoners due to the change of government (Mitskevich, 1980, p. 2).

The Provisional Government did proclaim the equality of all citizens and announced freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and religion. It issued amnesty to all prisoners and those in exile, and promised reform of the judicial system in Russia. That was an unprecedented event in Russian history. The Russian people embraced these new opportunities, which they called freedom. Because of the proclamation of freedom of religion, the government terminated all cases against Baptists. Over 800 exiled and imprisoned Evangelicals were able to return home (Coleman, 2005, p. 137).

In December 1916, the government filed a lawsuit against Prokhanov's Evangelical Christian Union. The government summarized its accusations in paragraphs 124 and 129. Paragraph 124 stated that the government could imprison the leadership of the Russian Evangelical Christian Union for the term of one year. Paragraph 129 referred to imprisonment up to eight years. On 28 February 1917, the main court building was destroyed by fire and everything inside burned, including all of the documents against Evangelical Christians. On 8 March 1917, the Provisional Government issued an amnesty that included the leaders of the Evangelical Christian Union (Mitskevich, 1980, p. 2).

The release of the Evangelical leaders resulted in the evangelization of Russia and the offer of a new vision for new Russia during very turbulent times (Coleman, 2005, p. 137). On 20 June 1917, the Provisional Government adopted a new decree that separated the Church and school. This was one of provisions that Evangelical Christians were asking from the Provisional Government (Savinsky, 2001, p. 16).

During the months following the February Revolution, Evangelical Christians frequently gathered to offer special prayers of thanksgiving to God for the newly obtained freedom. They sent telegrams to the Duma and the Provisional Government with offers of support and encouragement. One of the telegrams from Siberia said, 'Long live the democratic republic.' In those telegrams, believers linked together political and religious liberation (Coleman, 2005, p. 138). The Evangelical movement tried to help and encourage the process of building a new democratic Russia. At the same time, Evangelicals were trying to find their place in the new democratic Russia where they could participate in the political life of the country (Popov, 2011).

While these activities took place mostly in larger cities, rural Christians were expressing their support for the Provisional Government and democratic changes as well in telegrams and letters sent by provincial evangelicals to the Provisional Government. Local Protestant peasants described their support of freedom and democratic changes. In some cases, they talked about Russia's resurrection to a new life and freedom. In their correspondence, they used the image of suffering Russia and called for a new and much better way of life (Coleman, 2005, p. 139).

Towards the end of 1917, the Provisional Government faced instability and turmoil in the country. In spite of new opportunities presented shortly after the revolution, Russia was in chaos. The new government did not have full control of the country. Different factions and groups exercised control over some regions. On a number of occasions, citizens of Russia flooded streets to express their opinions about the future direction of the country.

At that time, Evangelicals tried to defend the February Revolution of 1917 and the Provisional Government who gave them the opportunity to preach and organize their ministry. The Provisional Government did not support the views of the Bolsheviks who represented the Socialist Party. Later, the Bolsheviks seized political control overthrowing the Provisional Government in an October uprising.

#### **2.4.2 The Development of the Idea of Spiritual Revolution**

At the time, Russian Evangelicals spoke of the revolution of the spirit, which the country needed if it desired any true transformation (Coleman, 2005, p. 148). Evangelicals continued to suggest that political, economic and social changes could not change the conscience of the people. They advocated spiritual transformation and longed to do everything that was in their power to bring it about under new conditions of freedom (Lunkin, 2011).

In his article on 'Christianity and Culture' (Rus. *Khristianstvo i kul'tura*), Leonid Mikhovich summarized the Russian Evangelicals' approach toward the culture. He stated that Prokhanov and many other Protestants did tremendous work to promote the concept that Christ can transform society. According to Mikhovich, Prokhanov, with his idea of the Russian Spiritual Revolution, followed in the footsteps of Augustine and Martin Luther (Mikhovich, 2005). Vladislav Bachinin offered interesting insights on why Prokhanov was so eager to lead Russians on a path of spiritual transformation:

Prokhanov had an opportunity to realise that, speaking of moral integrity and purity, Protestant countries were better off than other nations. The reason for that was that the population read the Bible and listened to the Gospel-based sermons. Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox offered very little room for the reading of the Scriptures ... The more Prokhanov had first-hand encounter with Western Protestantism,

the more he was convinced that the path he chose was right. In the end, he came to Russia with the firm idea that only the Gospel could change the country for the better (Bachinin, 2000).

In some sense, the Evangelicals placed themselves in opposition to the Bolshevik movement, which came to power as a result of the October Revolution of 1917. Bachinin indicated:

Prokhanov could not accept Communist recipes concerning the Russian revolutionary movement ... Prokhanov thought that the failure of all popular social and philosophical movements was in the proposal that a man should change himself and the world with his own efforts. Prokhanov considered it impossible because of sinful nature of human beings. Solution was in the message of the Gospel, which proposed change of life with the help of Jesus Christ, for whom all is possible (Bachinin, 2000).

Later, during the period of church persecution, the Communist propaganda machine used the Evangelical views of the 1917 against them. They branded Evangelicals as supporters of capitalism and the Provisional Government.

In May 1917, Pavel Pavlov and Timchenko, leaders of the Baptist movement, again launched the popular newspaper *Slovo istiny* (The Word of Truth). In the very first editorial, they declared that Christianity should not be passive and distant from the lives of the people but practical, and real, with concrete goals and focused on certain aspects of the daily lives of the people (V. Pavlov, 1917).

The Evangelicals became quite excited over the new opportunities being offered. They returned to the concept they previously held and began to develop new ideas that were unique for those times (Sannikov, 1996). For example, members of the church in Berdichev marched downtown with banners and slogans that read, 'Long live freedom! Now we are able to preach Jesus Christ crucified' (1918b). Russian Evangelicals of the time experienced what can be labelled a 'spiritual romanticism.' Bachinin indicated that 'Prokhanov dreamed of restoring the times of the early church in Russia, the country, which he called "the land of great sorrow"' (Bachinin, 2000).

#### **2.4.2.1 The Resurrection Metaphor and Its Significance for Russia**

In 1917, Russian Evangelicals came to rethink the concept of Christ's resurrection. The February Revolution took place about a month before Easter, which was a national holiday. The Evangelical Christians called this period the time of 'the Russian resurrection'. This concept was not only widespread in larger cities, but also very popular in small towns and villages. Alexander Dobrynin, one of the Evangelicals that lived at the time, wrote that twice in his life, he experienced the height of great joy. The first time was 1909, when he underwent a conversion experience. The second time was 1917 during the Easter season when freedom came to Russia. Dobrynin remarked, 'We were intoxicated with liberty after the persecutions

we endured before, especially during the last years of the war. It was like being released from bondage' (Coleman, 2005, p. 140).

In the earlier issues of the Baptist publication *Slovo istiny*, authors compared Russia to Lazarus's resurrection from the Gospel of John, chapter 11. The terminology of the resurrection was predominant in political circles as well.

The theme of resurrection was predominant in the thinking of Russians Evangelicals from the very beginning of the movement. In a theological sense, the resurrection metaphor was employed to describe change in one's inner being and his or her acceptance of new life in Jesus Christ. The use of this metaphor was prevalent during the Easter season of 1917. It expressed the excitement of the people and politicians and their hope that life could change for the better. Through the metaphor, Russian Evangelicals expressed their expectations of things to come after the February/March Revolution.

However, since the mid-1920s, Russian Evangelicals began to experience persecutions and tremendous difficulties at which time they reverted to the use of the metaphor of resurrection only to signify change in one's inner being. No longer was the metaphor used to describe their longing for change in the whole country, a sad example of how a metaphor can signify different things, depending upon the time when it is used.

#### **2.4.2.2 The Concept of the Revolution of the Spirit**

Russian Evangelicals used other concepts as well. These are evident in correspondence addressed to the Provisional Government. Many of the telegrams can be found in Russian archives. Among such concepts were ideas of salvation, citizenship, liberty, equality, and revolution. One of the concepts that came to symbolize the year 1917 and the changes that were taking place, was the 'revolution of the spirit' (Coleman, 2005, p. 140). These concepts and ideas were shared not only in publications, but also from the church pulpits (Prokhanov, 1933, p. 171).

What did Russian Evangelical Christians have in mind when they spoke and wrote about 'the revolution of the spirit?' Was it, by any chance, an idea of spiritual reformation of Russia? Ivan Prokhanov has put this concept to great use. This is why some historians call him 'the leader of the reformation in Russia' (Popov, 1996, p. 87). In his autobiography, Prokhanov wrote:

Humanity can reach ideal social life only through love and compassion. I think that those who seek revenge chose a wrong course of action. Violence and retribution cannot bring change. They cannot change conditions in which man lives, nor can they transform him spiritually. Transformation is possible only through religion ... I myself was in favour of the liberal movement, yet I instinctively felt that social

revolution is not going to solve all issues, though it could take place. The real answer is the revolution of the spirit (Prokhanov, 1933, pp. 40-41).

Prokhanov viewed the spiritual reformation of the Russian Church to be different from what he observed in the West. The Russian Orthodox Church had divisions and splits in its midst but had never faced a reformation like the Roman Catholic Church in the sixteenth century. Prokhanov thought of a unique way in which the reformation was to take place in Russia (Popov, 1996, p. 87).

Russian spiritual reformation was one of the main goals of Ivan Prokhanov's life. It was greatly reinforced after the February Revolution of 1917 (Popov, 1996, p. 88). Prokhanov thought that the reformation was to go beyond Russia and reach Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. He even thought of reformation among Russian emigrants in the United States. Prokhanov treated spiritual reformation and spiritual revolution as identical terms. He considered spiritual reformation in the deep connection with the revolutionary events in the Russian Empire. He used the term of spiritual revolution in order to stress that connection with the times they lived in. In his autobiography, Prokhanov wrote that Christians rejoiced in having freedom after the February Revolution of 1917. He started to work in St. Petersburg right away by initiating a publication of the *Khristianin* (Christian) magazine and a newspaper entitled *Utrennyaya zvezda* (The Morning Star). Because of the revolution, however, publishing houses were in chaos. They were not able to fill orders on time. Nevertheless, Evangelicals tried to organize their work and found paper for printing.

Places of worship in St. Petersburg were reopened. Christians tried to organize massive worship services in the most spacious auditoriums in St. Petersburg. One of those services took place in the Circus of Chinezell where over one thousand people attended the service. Evangelicals also held morning worship services in the Tchekhovskiy auditorium. After the worship service, they walked toward the building of the circus, preaching and singing on street corners. Crowds of people joined the march and followed into the building where Christians continued to worship. The service began with prayer. After that, the congregation sang and listened to two or three sermons. Prokhanov usually preached at the end of the service. He remembered that he preached for no less than forty minutes. Spiritual revolution was at the heart of his preaching. The idea was that political revolution was for the benefit of the government. However, every human being was in need of a spiritual revolution, which means that one was to give first place in his life to God (Prokhanov, 1933, p. 172).

At the same time, Prokhanov lectured on 'the Reformation after the Revolution.' He called for a change in external conditions. It was not enough for one to care for only material things but rather to have a new birth and creation of a new heart (Mikhovich, 2011).



According to Prokhanov, 'Reformation is the renewal of one's character which results in one being alive to worship God in spirit and truth' (Prokhanov, 1922). He compared this sort of transformation to 'building of a new house on a new foundation' as opposed to 'repairing a roof or any other section of the building' (Prokhanov, 1922).

Prokhanov wanted to capture the moment. He saw that Russia was going through unprecedented political changes, and he wanted to follow up with a spiritual transformation of the country. Though pleased by changes happening on the political front, Prokhanov distinguished between the concepts of political and spiritual revolution. He held an opinion that 'each human heart had to go through spiritual transformation, reject sin and turn to God' (Bachinin, 2000).

The theme of Spiritual Revolution and Reformation in Russia came in papers and speeches of the Congress of Evangelical Christians that took place in May 1917 (1917f). It was the first congress that took place after years of persecution.

Along with being a leader of the Russian Evangelical Christian movement, Ivan Prokhanov was also a talented songwriter. One of the hymns he wrote reflected the idea of the Spiritual Revolution in Russia, 'We are called to freedom, brothers! We are not slaves but citizens of the fatherland.' Believers in many Evangelical churches in Russia as well as Slavic emigrants in North America and beyond still sing it during worship. As time went by, the original meaning of the words were spiritualized, however in 1917, the hymn called to freedom and Spiritual Revolution in Russia.

One of the ways to embody Prokhanov's idea of spiritual revolution in practice was his attempt to develop a new relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church. Scant documents can be found today that could shed light on the relationship between the Russian Evangelical Christians and the Orthodox Church. The period after the revolutions of 1917 was, no doubt, a difficult one for the Orthodox Church.

The Russian Evangelical leader was concerned with the state of the Orthodox Church. From conversations with priests, he understood that they themselves acknowledged that the Russian nation did not know Christ. Millions of Russians revered icons and the saints. According to Prokhanov, that was a sort of 'spiritual fetishism' in the church. He also understood that the symphony between the Russian Orthodox Church and state authorities harmed the church. According to Prokhanov, 'Some priests needed more preaching than parishioners' (Prokhanov, 1933).

There is evidence that Prokhanov tried to make contact with the Orthodox before and after the October Socialist Revolution of 1917. The main purpose of these attempts was to initiate the spiritual reformation of Russia. Prokhanov initiated a conversation with the Orthodox clergy as early as 1911 and this conversation continued well into the 1920s. For example, we know that Prokhanov met with one of the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Anthony, in the Novospassk Monastery.

Anthony mentioned that he read Prokhanov's letter called the 'Evangelical Invitation' that was widely distributed among the Orthodox Christians. He liked what Prokhanov said in the letter, yet at the same time, felt that the right time for spiritual reformation in Russia had not yet come. After the conversation, Prokhanov requested that both of them pray about the Russian reformation, which they did (Popov, 1996, p. 91).

Metropolitan Anthony continued his ministry under the influence of the idea of spiritual reformation of the country (Popov, 1996, p. 91). He drew harsh criticism from his Orthodox peers after making some changes in the worship service in his diocese. After that, Anthony took the initiative to speak publicly in favour of the spiritual reformation in the Church. He told the members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church that their actions were negative. He also announced the creation of a new church body, which was called 'the Revived Church' (Rus. *Obnovlennaya tserkov'*) and advocated the reformation of the Christian lifestyle. He acknowledged disagreements with other Christian groups. He stated that he had nothing in common with Patriarch Tikhon because he rejected the church hierarchy. In place of hierarchy, he was in favour of fellowship and the priesthood of all believers (1923).

In 1922, Prokhanov and Metropolitan Anthony agreed to hold joint services of Evangelical and Orthodox Christians. One of the priests in Moscow, Boyarski, openly expressed his regret that the Orthodox Church previously persecuted Evangelicals (Popov, 1996, p. 92). When Metropolitan Anthony became gravely ill in 1926, his last wish was that the Church of Peter and Paul in Moscow would remain open for Evangelical worship services. Thus, when Prokhanov visited Moscow, he preached at the Church of Peter and Paul (Popov, 1996, p. 93).

When addressing the Orthodox, Prokhanov wrote a special petition called 'The Call of the Gospel.' In the petition, Prokhanov expressed three important ideas. First of all, he stated that Evangelicals had forgiven their Orthodox persecutors. Secondly, he stated that the time had come for the Orthodox Church to undergo reformation. Third, Prokhanov expressed readiness of the Evangelicals to hold special prayer services over all the country to ask God

for help in reforming the church. According to Bachinin, 'Prokhanov's petition could have become a landmark in the spiritual history of post-revolutionary Russia. It could have led to new perspectives and could have shown that the Orthodox and the Evangelicals have one common foundation, the Gospel, upon which they could have built social, civil and inter-church relations' (Prokhanov, 1933).

#### **2.4.2.3 Vladimir Martzinkovski and the Idea of Spiritual Reformation of Russia**

Vladimir Martzinkovski,<sup>21</sup> an active Christian leader and writer who considered himself an Orthodox believer with nominal ties to the Orthodox Church at the time, agreed with Ivan Prokhanov's idea of spiritual reformation of Russia (Sannikov, 1996). Martzinkovski had a good relationship with the leadership of Evangelical Christians and Baptists, and shared some of their views. Later on, he became an Evangelical Christian. He was the leader of the Christian Student Movement (Rus. *Khristianskoye studencheskoye dvizheniye*) and called that time 'the spring of the revolution' or 'the romance of the revolution' (Martzinkovski, 1929, p. 32). In his view, the revolution of the spirit meant that Russian society was in need of a revival. He believed that along with the change of the form of government, the revolution of the spirit should change a person from within. Only in this way would society undergo a lasting change.

In his memoirs, entitled *Zapiski veruyushchego* (Believer's Journal), Martzinkovski wrote that when freedom came, everybody started to talk freely. Evangelicals held lectures and produced flyers. People stayed and listened to discussions on religious topics even when it rained. According to Martzinkovski, 'it felt like the water of life was healing the dry soil of Russia.' He was invited to different cities to lecture on spiritual subjects. His presentations concentrated on the meaning of the Gospel, and Freedom and the Revolution of the Spirit. These lectures were quite popular. People from different walks of life attended. They were all interested in the idea of the Revolution of the Spirit. Martzinkovski recounts that in the town of Lochwize, Ukraine the youth filled the room, and there was not even standing room left. Over 100 teachers attended as well. Many young people expressed their desire to begin to study the Gospel. In the town of Lubnach, the auditorium could not hold all the people that wanted to hear about the revolution of the spirit. Many of them were listening to lectures through the open windows of the building. In Volynskaya Guberniya, peasants came with questions. They listened with attention. When Martzinkovski asked them whether they

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<sup>21</sup> Vladimir Martzinkovski (1884 - 1971) was a Russian Christian writer, preacher and theologian. He was a leader of the Russian Christian Student Union.

understood the content of what he said, they replied, 'We do understand. It is very pleasing to our hearts.' The older people had a good response as well (Martzinkovski, 1929, p. 32).

#### **2.4.3 Political Involvement of Russian Evangelicals in 1917 Revolution Events**

In 1917, Prokhanov established the Resurrection (Rus. *Voskreseniye*) political party. The main goal of this party was to express religious views of the Evangelicals, and especially of the religious and other dissidents whom the previous Russian government persecuted. Prokhanov wanted to make the views of the Evangelicals public (1917d). Prokhanov and the Resurrection Party desired to find a place for the voice of the Evangelicals in the newly evolving scene (Bachinin, 2000).

The platform of the party included a wide range of issues, including social and international aspects. The particulars included the right of workers to strike, entitlement to an eight-hour workday, the right to pensions for the retired and the right for education. According to the party programme, it saw Russia as a federal state, in which regions would have some degree of autonomy from the centre. On the international stage, the party proposed the removal of the threat of war and creation of the world union of states, which would regulate international affairs.

Despite Prokhanov's high expectations, the Evangelical Christian Congress that took place in May of 1917 did not approve the party as the official representative of the Union of Evangelical Christians. The debates clearly indicated the difficulty of defining where faith comes into play in the process of the construction of a new society (Kolomiitsev, 2012). The Congress made a decision that the Resurrection Party was to function as a formation initiated by individual members of the Evangelical Christian Union, but would not be a part of the Union itself (1917g). In spite of this decision, many Evangelical Christians at the time were participating in different social and political activities and parties. They participated in city assemblies, regional committees and local Dumas in order to support democratic reforms and advocate new opportunities (Coleman, 2005, p. 139).

Although Prokhanov managed to form a political party, divisions among Evangelical Christians over the involvement in politics persisted. Some of the leaders held to revolutionary concepts, arguing that Jesus himself was a revolutionary who changed society in His time. They compared Jesus' mission to the revolution and new opportunities that existed in Russia. They used Scriptural references to back their arguments. However, the problem was how ordinary Christians understood the question of political involvement

(Kolomiitsev, 2012). The essence of the debates centred on whether Christians should have their own political party or whether they should live out their faith and the teachings of Jesus while belonging to secular political parties. Such debates were not unique to Evangelicals. Society itself had to rethink the concepts of liberty and equality of all human individuals, coming out of the tsarist past. The Socialist theory had the concept of liberty in the form of the working class having the power and the establishment of the one-party system.

In his autobiography, Prokhanov carefully addressed this issue. He indicated that although he evaluated the political situation in Russia and thought to take advantage of the new opportunities, his main concern was about the religious side of the issue, not politics. One of the meetings he led had the slogan 'Say "No" to Politics! Say "Yes" to the Gospel' (Prokhanov, 1933, p. 170). Prokhanov thought that the Gospel was the best medicine for any kind of spiritual disease. His goal was to break the boundaries between the Bolsheviks [the Majority] and the Mensheviks [the Minority], between a man and a woman through belief in Jesus Christ. Evangelical Christians welcomed justice and freedom 'that served the good of the people.' However, he was against taking part in any political party because of the methods based upon hate. Prokhanov believed that they went against Christian values of love and compassion (Prokhanov, 1933, p. 170).

Despite this declaration, he did take part in some political activities, which he specifically mentions in his autobiography. One such occasion was the Moscow Conference that took place on 18 August 1917. The Head of the Provisional Government, Alexander Kerensky, invited Evangelicals to participate with Prokhanov taking ten minutes to speak in support of the Provisional Government.

Another instance mentioned by Prokhanov in his election campaign, was to get into the local Duma with participation of the Resurrection Party and Prokhanov himself. He saw this as a way to make the party known to society. The Evangelicals used this opportunity well. The results were better than they anticipated. They collected more votes than Plekhanov's Social-Democratic Party (Prokhanov, 1933, p. 171).

Massive strikes took place in Russia between July and October of 1917. Different political movements longed to overthrow the Provisional Government. Prokhanov attended one of the meetings held by Prime Minister Kerensky as a representative of the Evangelical Christian Union. He spoke in support of the Provisional Government and the idea of spiritual transformation of Russia, which had not taken place yet. In his remarks, he emphasized that

the Spiritual Revolution was an answer to the troubles the country faced. He insisted that Russian society could be saved only by spiritual means and even went so far as to rally support for the Provisional Government at the Conference of Evangelical Christians.

In August of 1917, *Slovo istiny* published the speech delivered by Prokhanov at the conference. He said that Russia stood at the crossroads and that freedom now was turning into something that could cause problems. Many of the goals that the revolution tried to reach were not achieved. The class divisions between people became even wider, which in turn led to civil unrest and strikes (1917i). In October of 1917, *Slovo istiny* published an article, in which the author expressed the hope that Russian citizens would come to an understanding of the Scriptures and follow the path of freedom and equality for all people (1917c). Some Baptists were taking part in political events as well, although not all Baptists agreed that involvement in politics was what Christians were to participate in (Kolomiytsev, 2012). In his diary, Vasiliy Gur'evich Pavlov wrote that Moscow Baptists attended meetings of the Social-Democratic Club (Pavlov, 1917b).

After the Socialist Revolution of October 1917, *Slovo istiny* published an editorial, which stated that a believer could not be a member of any political party (1917e). The editor wrote that Christians should maintain their separation from the world, which included staying away from political activities. In spite of this, the evidence shows that some Baptists shared the goal of Socialism with Socialist parties (Coleman, 2005, p. 147).

#### **2.4.4 The Development of Baptists' Intellectual Thought in the Context of February 1917 Revolution in Russia**

Since the February 1917 Revolution, Russian Evangelical leaders initiated large public gatherings, at which they expressed their political views on the future of democratic Russia (Mikhovich, 2011). The topics discussed included the relationship between Church and state as well as prosperity, equality and liberty. Leaders of both movements argued that the only way a political revolution could have a lasting effect was when the revolution of the spirit or Spiritual Revolution preceded it (Coleman, 2005, p. 147).

One of the most noticeable meetings took place at the Moscow Polytechnic Institute, the gathering place of Russian intelligentsia for different forums and discussions. Baptists rented one of the spacious auditoriums in order to present their views regarding the current situation in Russia. Many scientists, political leaders and distinguished people of Russian culture, who longed for change in their homeland, spoke in this auditorium. It is interesting to point out

that the Bolsheviks continued to use the same auditorium for similar purposes even after the October Revolution of 1917 (Pavlov, 2004, p. 195).

On 3 April 1917, Vasilii Pavlov, one of the Baptist leaders, lectured in the Polytechnic Institute on the subject of 'The Separation of the Church and State.' His son, Pavel Pavlov, gave a lecture on 'Baptists Political Demands.' Timchenko, another Baptist leader who recently returned from exile, talked about Baptist principles. The events were well attended and generated revenue from the sale of tickets. Baptists used the money to help those suffering from persecution for their political or religious convictions (1917h). In his lecture, Vasilii Pavlov emphasized that Christians had a goal of building a new structure of common life. As they tried to work on correcting the injustice and mistakes of the former government, the question he raised was one of the relationship between the Church and the state (Pavlov, 1917c, p. 102).

In his presentation, Pavlov addressed those who were building a new life in Russia, emphasizing that they could not ignore the important issue of separation between the Church and the state. He particularly stressed the words 'New Russia' and 'New Opportunity.' He stated there was no future for Russia without the principle of separation between the Church and the state (Pavlov, 1917c, p. 103). Addressing the Provisional Government, he demanded that Baptists 'understood the union of the Church and the state to be an abnormal and dangerous thing for both sides' (Pavlov, 1917c, p. 104). According to Pavlov, Russia would have neither a future nor freedom without the separation between the Church and the state. He went on to explain the history of the Church-state relationship in the country and pointed out aspects where things went wrong that led to dire consequences. 'There were such bad consequences of the union between the Church and the state for both faith and freedom' (Pavlov, 1917c, p. 104). He believed that the Church was a spiritual organization that existed for saving souls. To achieve this goal of saving souls, churches were to use the weapon of God's Word. He also believed that the task of the government was to protect material things and the lives of people. Those in power were to take care of the wellbeing of the people. The state should punish criminals and help those who were up to doing good. Pavlov attributed to the government the right to use physical force when necessary. He did not believe that true freedom could come from the symphony between the Church and the state because in those conditions one faith would be preferred to another.

Pavlov stated that religion should be everyone's personal matter. He believed that if the government offered no aid to the Church, then it should not interfere in its internal matters. Pavlov was in favour of abolishing the Department of Spiritual Affairs. He was advocating that churches were to become owners of the property, lands and monasteries. He was also

against Church registration of weddings. For these matters he envisioned a civil procedure (Pavlov, 1917c, p. 104).

In his lecture, Pavlov touched upon the subject of true conversion as he talked about the Orthodox Church and the introduction of Christianity in Russia. He argued that Russians did not go through the proper process of authentic conversion. When Prince Vladimir saw that people were not coming to faith as fast as he desired, he decided to convert them by force, even though this went against the essence of Christianity. He stated that Christianity was a religion of love and not one that used force. Vladimir issued a decree that all pagans in Kievan Rus had to be baptized. Those that refused were declared enemies of the Prince and state criminals. The decree had an immediate impact. Thousands were baptized, but there were many who did not go through real conversion. They accepted, but did not understand Christianity.

Pavlov argued that true faith comes through spiritual conversion. It is a voluntary choice, which is the result of one's search for truth. True freedom means freedom of choice. There is no freedom without an opportunity to make a choice. He also believed the Christian faith which people had to accept because of the use of force could not perform a spiritual and moral change within a person. People would remain pagans. Faith, which the government forced upon the people, was still under its control. People who had other opinions and thought differently fell under state persecution. The Tsar was charged with the task of protecting the Church's theology. He had his own representative in the Holy Synod, who actually ruled over the Church. Therefore, Pavlov believed that the Orthodox Church was completely in the hands of the Russian government. If one sinned against the Church, the state considered him a criminal. One was allowed to convert to another religion only with the permission of the Tsar himself who in reality would not grant such permission (Pavlov, 2004, p. 123).

According to Pavlov, the Bible itself speaks in favour of the principle of separation between the Church and the State. He used the words of Jesus, when he said, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's' (Mat. 22:21, NIV). He proposed the complete autonomy of the Church from the State and governmental activities. Religion was to be a personal matter of every individual.

Vasiliy Pavlov gave some attention to the activities of the Russian Socialist Party. He visited the city of Tambov, and while there lectured on freedom, brotherhood and equality. Over six hundred people filled the auditorium. He argued that the Socialists took many ideas from the teachings of Jesus. However, they neither accepted Jesus nor did they acknowledge His authorship of certain ideas (Pavlov, 1917b).



Pavel Pavlov gave a lecture entitled 'Political Demands of Baptists' at the Moscow Polytechnic Institute. Later on, *Golos istiny* published his entire speech. The main idea of the lecture was to paint the picture of a Church in a free democratic society. He said, 'Like birds need the sky and fish the water, so Baptists that proclaim the teachings of the Gospel need freedom' (Pavlov, 1917b, p. 253). He felt that people should learn from Baptists and their principles if they want to have a free and democratic state. 'In Baptist churches we have elections. We do not have bureaucracy or a hierarchical ladder, so to speak' (Pavlov, 1917b, p. 253).

He stated that Baptists cared about the economic and social situation in the country. Yet, he emphasized that social and political change could be initiated only through the Revolution of the Spirit. He called upon the audience 'to seek first the Kingdom of God, and the rest will come.' Baptists were striving toward Socialism, but in so doing did not wish to take power or possession of people's goods and lands. They did not want to take away people's right to own things but rather to aim toward spiritual truths so they would share with others some of the things they had. They were not against any government that followed the teachings of Christ. Using a contemporary example, Pavlov stated that England's Prime Minister Lloyd George, an evangelical believer himself, had done much to ease the social pains of the people. Monarchy in Russia, even in its best form and fashion, was very dangerous for the country (Pavlov, 1917b, p. 253).

Pavel Pavlov went so far as to offer a list of demands. He advocated for a democratic republic, the freedom of unions, public assemblies, speech and printed word. He spoke in favour of the separation of the Church and the state and civil registration of marriages. He objected to capital punishment and argued for respect of individual's rights and their property. Pavlov argued for equality of all citizens regardless of their faith and nationality, for freedom of worship and preaching for all religious groups, which did not go against the moral principles and exhibited a proper recognition of the government. He favoured the freedom of an individual to move from one denomination to another, and the recognition of marriages and births of those who were not in the Church records upon a condition of having two witnesses. Pavlov spoke in support of a free legal status for all religious groups and unions (Pavlov, 1917b, p. 253).

Pavel Pavlov realized that freedom had its limitations. According to him, the true followers of Christ will always be subject to persecution in different forms. He said, 'Now we can tell that one form of persecution is being abandoned by the new government' (Pavlov, 1917b, p. 253).

## **2.5 Baptist and Evangelical Congresses: Debates over Political Involvement**

In April and May of 1917, Evangelicals held congresses with the purpose of reconstructing and rethinking activities of both organizations. At those gatherings, they discussed and developed new strategies of mission work throughout Russia in new conditions of freedom (1917b).

The Baptist Union's Congress took place on 15 April 1917 in Vladikavkaz. During the Congress, Baptist leaders encouraged participants to be actively engaged in missionary and social work in the country. As Vasiliy Pavlov travelled throughout the Caucasus and looked at Baptist ministries there, he decided to preach a message on 'Look at the Fields, They are Ready for the Harvest.'

He observed good conditions for spiritual revival in different regions of the country, especially central Russia. He attributed it to the work of the Holy Spirit. One of the questions he asked during his remarks at the Congress was, 'Are we really doing what we are supposed to be doing? What are we doing for the Kingdom of God in conditions of widely open doors of freedom? Do we consider ourselves to be worthy servants of Jesus Christ?' There was tremendous spiritual excitement among the ninety delegates and fifty guests of the Congress. It was the first gathering of this nature that Baptists were able to hold in the previous six years without the police looking over their shoulders.

Dey Mazaev, one of the leaders of the Baptist movement, said in his remarks, 'In the last two years, because of war and persecution, the activities of the Baptist Union came to a halt. Now we have to revive the missionary and social work of the Church.' At the Congress, Baptists decided to have an annual offering that would support missionary and social work. Among other causes, they wanted to help retired pastors as well as widows and orphans. Baptists also planned to initiate opportunities for the theological education of church members. They designated a special fund for starting a seminary (Pavlov, 1917b, p. 197).

The Congress of the Evangelical Christian Union took place on 17-25 May 1917 in St. Petersburg. The leadership of Evangelical Christians invited Baptists to come to the Congress, where they hoped to discuss with them the possibility of cooperation and even unification of both movements for the sake of reaching Russia in the new conditions of freedom (Kale, p. 153). In spite of the official invitation, Baptists did not have a strong representation at the Evangelical Christian Congress. Thus, the decision about the unification of the two movements was delayed.

Over 100 delegates attended the Congress chaired by Prokhanov (Kale, p. 154). In addition to the issue of unification, the delegates discussed problems related to the freedom of conscience and religion. Prokhanov addressed the Congress on the subject of formation of the Resurrection Christian Democratic Party (Mitskevich, 1980, p. 8).

Both gatherings of the Evangelicals in 1917 brought great encouragement to their communities throughout Russia. The delegates of both congresses left for home with an extreme sense of urgency and responsibility for missionary and social work (Mitskevich, 1980, p. 8). The desire shown by the Evangelical Christians toward unification led Prokhanov to have a stronger voice and Christian presence in Russian society. However, it was not destined to happen until 1944, when the Evangelicals formed the AUCECB under pressure from Stalin's government (Kolomiytsev, 2012).

One of the reasons why the Evangelicals could not unite was a misunderstanding over the issue of leadership. At the time, when Evangelical Christians were in favour of Prokhanov's appointment as the leader of the new union, some Baptist leaders disagreed, considering that his political activity went too far at times and compromised some of the biblical principles (Bourdeaux, 1968, p. 6). Kargel, the leading Baptist theologian of the time, accused Prokhanov of biblical compromise and warned of dire consequences for the church in Russia (Kargel, 2000, p. 305).

Unfortunately, the question of Prokhanov's leadership was one of the 'stumbling blocks' to the establishment of the new organization. It has to be pointed out that for a number of years Prokhanov was the Vice-President of the BWA, even though technically he was not a Baptist.

After the February Revolution of 1917, Evangelical Christians held discussions on the relationship between religion and socialism. It is important to point out that there were disagreements among them over involvement in the political life of Russia (Kargel, 2000, p. 305). Debates centred on the definition of revolution, socialism and citizenship in relation to Christianity and the Scriptures (Coleman, 2005, p. 142). Such discussions took place not only among Christians, but also in wide political and social circles of the country. The debates often led to misunderstandings and disagreements among believers (Coleman, 2005, p. 143).

Even though in their publications (such as *Slovo istiny*), sermons, and lectures Evangelical Christians were asking important questions concerning the future of new Russia

and showing a worthy pursuit of their place in Russian society, internal debates weakened both movements and discouraged the leadership (Popov, 1996, p. 88).

### **2.5.1 Mission and Outreach Activities of the Russian Evangelicals right after the February Revolution of 1917**

The February Revolution and new freedoms obtained by Russian Evangelicals caused a spark in missional and social activities. Evangelicals reopened churches that were previously closed by the Tsarist Government. One example was a church in Chernogorye, which reopened its doors on Sunday, 12 March 1917 after being closed for a long time. The congregation held two Sunday morning services that started at 8:00 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. at the *Tekhnicheskaya* auditorium. The two posters that hung in the front of the room said, 'Brothers, we are called to freedom' and 'Long live free Russia! Long live freedom of preaching the Gospel!' Ivan Prokhanov was one of the main speakers. Before he started preaching, he congratulated everyone present on the freedom they now enjoyed. While praying and worshipping, many church members could not hide their tears of joy. They glorified God for new freedoms and for fellow believers who returned from prisons and exile (Mitskevich, 1980, p. 3).

Evangelical Christian churches in Moscow reopened on 18 March 1917. Due to recent political turbulence, there was no public transportation. Even so, the church building on *Sretenka* was filled to capacity. Arthur Mitskevich, one of the ministers, delivered a sermon after the invocation. He read a text from Acts 12, which tells of Peter's deliverance from prison. He further emphasized, 'God judged Emperor Nicholas in a unique and miraculous way. He gave freedom to all that were standing for their Christian beliefs.'

The next proclaimer, Tolgopolo, asked those recently released from prison and exile to stand up so that the rest of the congregation could see them. When they stood up, believers began to offer fervent prayers of thanksgiving to God for their freedom.

When the Baptist leader, Vasiliy Pavlov, returned to Moscow in May of 1917, he immediately started to organize different evangelistic services all over Moscow. He was also able to hold street services in the Southern city of Odessa, which were well attended (Pavlov, 1917b, p. 198). At the theatre, at *Uzkikh Vorot*, Baptists started a new church led by Mitskevich and Chirikov.

On 23 April 1917, Baptists held a worship service at the former Reformed Church on *Malyi Vuzovskiy Pereulok*, 3,<sup>22</sup> where today, the Central Moscow Baptist Church holds its services. From the 1940s to the 1990s, the building served as the headquarters of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the U.S.S.R. (Mitskevich, 1980, p. 3).

Evangelical youth, which previously met only underground, came out and started an active ministry in Moscow and other locations in March 1917. Twelve young people who returned from prisons and exile led one of the youth services. They still held the marks from chains on their hands and wounds from torture on their bodies. Many of them had long prison sentences, including life imprisonment. They all were dressed in prisoners' clothes.

Because Moscow was a major railroad hub, many prisoners transferred from Moscow to their hometowns in different parts of Russia. Young Christians from Moscow organized a drive to help get clothes for those released from prisons, as well as offered them food and shelter.

Savel'ev, one of the leaders, was especially active in this ministry, leading worship services for those released from prisons. They held services until 2:30 a.m., during which they prayed, read the Scriptures and shared stories. Vasiliy Chirikov was the leader of the Moscow Christian Youth Movement at the time (Mitskevich, 1980, p. 3).

One of the archival documents shows that the activities of Christian youth in Moscow often centred on outdoor markets. Thousands of people visited the *Chitrkisyugo* Market in Moscow, where they could buy groceries. Many hotels and inns were located in close proximity to the market, which naturally drew people from all walks of life, including the homeless and runaway children.

The united choir from different Evangelical churches in Moscow would come and sing at the market. After the performance, people would approach choir members and ask them questions. People held different opinions about the Evangelicals, yet everybody listened to the singing. The young people from the choir invited those present to the worship services on *Malyi Vuzovskiy Pereulok* (Mitskevich, 1980, p. 3).

On 19 March 1917, Evangelical Christians started the Movement of Evangelical Soldiers. Before the February Revolution, soldiers were not allowed to attend Evangelical

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<sup>22</sup> Today it is *Malyi Trekhsvyatitel'skiy Pereulok*.

churches. A soldier, Dik, became the leader of the movement that visited military hospitals and different rehabilitation centres. During such visits, soldiers prayed and shared the Gospel with the wounded. The movement even had an orchestra that performed in hospitals and rehabilitation centres. The soldiers from the movement helped the wounded, homeless and poor by bringing them to church and offering them hot meals.

Eventually, the MES purchased a building on *Pokrovka*, 9, where they distributed 1,020 Bibles, 3,229 New Testaments, 23,000 flyers and 2,229 different hymns. Initially, they held three worship services per week, however, by the end of the year they increased the number of services to five (Mitskevich, 1980, p. 3). During services, Christian prisoners, released after the February Revolution, shared their stories and testimonies, which encouraged those in attendance (Koval'kov). The MES also published its own paper *Budil'nik sovesti* (The Alarm of Conscience) (1918a).

The Evangelicals made an effort to start new churches all over Russia. They held well-attended evangelistic services in different regions of the country which resulted in the planting of new churches in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Samara, Saratov, Kharkov, Kiev, Odessa, Ryazan' and Smolensk. Some of these churches met under open skies (on street corners and restaurants) because they did not have buildings. Evangelists from larger churches would travel all over the country, visiting smaller towns and remote villages. They held outreach services and shared the Gospel with thousands of Russians. Local governing bodies cooperated by helping invite the population to the services (Savinsky, 2001, p. 15).

Alexander Karev was the leader of the Street Mission in St. Petersburg. The main goal of the mission was preaching Christ on the streets of the city (Savinsky, 2001, p. 15). In Kiev, Kirichenko organized the Tent Mission. He set up tents in parks and on the streets for preaching the Gospel. These activities were well received by locals, and the Tent Mission spread its activities as far as Byelorussia (1927c).

In June 1917, Balikhin, one of the Evangelical leaders in Southern Russia, was released from prison. He immediately started outreach in the Crimean peninsula. In one month, he baptized over twenty new converts (1917a).

A. Kareva, wife of Alexander Karev, (1894-1971), and one of the leaders of the Russian Evangelicals, wrote in her memoirs that 1917 was an exciting but also challenging time for the movement. She wrote that the Revolutions of 1917 brought about complete destruction. The streetcars did not function, and people had to walk everywhere. People were shooting at each other from the attics of the buildings with machine guns. The unemployment was so high that thousands of people were standing in line at the employment centre. There

were food shortages. Buildings were cold and disease was spreading. Christians left the cities and went to the countryside in search of safety and better nutrition. Kareva's relatives went to the Tverskaya region. The Street Mission, operated by the Evangelicals, was involved in various ministries. It published the magazine *Prizyv* (A Call). Christians felt like it was the right time to tell people about hope in Christ. They wanted to call people to the One who said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28, KJV; Kareva, 1996, p. 188).

Kareva wrote in her memoirs about the ministry 'to the poorest of the poor,' i.e. close to 9,000 people that lived in the poorest section of St. Petersburg. They were so poor that many said, 'They lived like animals.' The Street Mission organized worship services for such people. They took place in dark hallways and attracted many visitors. Kareva wrote, 'We saw tears in the eyes of the people as they listened to the Gospel message' (Kareva, 1996, p. 188).

As Prokhanov described it in his autobiography, 1917 was a joyous time for Christians in Russia and for the work of the Gospel in general. Thousands of people heard the preaching of the Gospel at different worship services all over St. Petersburg. 'It was a time of unlimited freedom that filled my heart with great enthusiasm. I saw a large mission field that lay before me. We all needed to get busy' (Prokhanov, 1933, p. 172).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The birth of the Russian Evangelical movement took place because of several factors, among which was the publication of the New Testament in Russian, emancipation of the serfs, spiritual decline in the Orthodox Church, as well as the positive influence of Western missionaries. From its very birth, the Evangelical movement encountered persecution from the government and the majority church.

In spite of harsh persecution by K. Pobedonostsev and the Russian Orthodox Church, Russian Evangelicals managed to preserve a missionary zeal that could not be stopped by imprisonments and exiles. With all their hearts, leaders of both movements, as well as ordinary believers, wished to reach the country with the word of Christ. Both Evangelical-Christians and Baptists actively participated in the life of Russian society. They made an effort to influence positive changes in society and advocated freedom of worship for all. It was with such expectations that Russian Evangelicals entered the year 1917.

The period between February and October of 1917 was a time of freedom and opportunities for the Evangelical movement in Russia. During that time, Russian

Evangelicals were trying to initiate reforms in the country in a unique Russian way. Evangelical leaders, led by Ivan Prokhanov and Pavel Pavlov, who were deeply concerned for the future of the country in which they lived, displayed a good measure of patriotism and were full of determination to seize the moment to spiritually transform the country. In spite of speaking publicly in favour of reforms, they experienced divisions in their midst that weakened both movements and limited their impact upon society. Divisions were caused by differences in positions of Evangelical-Christians (namely, Prokhanov) and Baptists (Kargel) regarding political involvement in state affairs. Prokhanov thought that the demonstration of Christ's love should overwhelm what he thought were 'secondary issues' regarding doctrine and praxis. The Baptist theologian, Kargel, thought that Baptist principles could not be compromised by ecumenical contacts with the Russian Orthodox Church and the state.

The main cause for which the Evangelicals stood was the Russian Spiritual Revolution, which could lead to the transformation of the hearts of Russian people. This unique movement had no help from the West. It emerged from the midst of Evangelicals because of their love of their country and a desire to change it. Evangelical believers stood for freedom of conscience and a free country that would be a home for everyone.

During this period, Russian Evangelicals were trying to open up to society as much as possible. In their contacts with the public, they used the idea of a revolution, which was well understood by the population at the time. By spiritualizing it, they called Russians to experience the Revolution of the Spirit.

In a very short period, Russian Evangelicals were able to accomplish substantial progress. They openly expressed their political and social demands for change, and were active in their efforts to promote the Spiritual Reformation of Russia. Later on, many active leaders of the movement were murdered, exiled or forced to emigrate by the new Soviet government. Their support of the Provisional Government and its policies indicated to the Evangelicals the kind of society they wanted to see in Russia.

In the history of the Russian Baptist movement, it was a time when they were able to express themselves openly not only as a religious denomination, but also as a politically active force that could have had an impact upon society. They had ministries they never had before, and they were creative in the way they implemented them. They responded in their unique way to the times of crisis in Russian society.



The time between February and October of 1917 is often called the beginning of the 'Golden Age of the Russian Evangelical Movement.' During this period, Evangelicals tried to find their own identity, deal with disagreements in their midst as well as find their place in society. In Vasiliy Pavlov's opinion, Russian Evangelicals longed for a 'free Church in a free society.'

The formation of the evangelical movement within the framework of the Russian Empire was a controversial process, which took place during hard conditions. From the government's point of view, the movement came into existence as a suspicious and illegal sect. In connection with that there were constant obstructions created against its spreading and missionary evangelical activity. The persecution of believers and especially their leaders was very evident. A certain challenge was presented by the struggle of the Russian Orthodox Church that served the government's imperial machine as an ideological tool against the evangelical movement. That is why the development of the evangelical movement's church structure was so complicated. However, the numerous attempts to create stable unions laid a foundation to further the work in that direction.

The experience of the collective life of the evangelicals in the Russian Empire was dramatic from the very beginning. The feeling of social and cultural trauma became only deeper as a result of numerous revolutions. In spite of the social changes that took place in connection with the revolutionary events of 1905 and 1917, evangelical leaders remained positive. Prokhanov, V. Pavlov and others hoped that the repression of the believers would be finished and there would be time for a real spiritual renovation of the society. That hope was conditioned by common expectations of the democratization of the political and social life. When their expectations were not realized, many people were disappointed.

## **CHAPTER THREE: EVANGELICALS IN THE U.S.S.R. IN THE 1920s**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter will review the main trends in the development of the evangelical movement in the 1920s: (1) mission and evangelism in the conditions of the present realities and orthodox culture, (2) the relationship between the evangelical movement and the state, and (3) the development of church structures. As already mentioned above, these three areas remain relevant for the development of the evangelical movement in the 1920s and 1990s in spite of their own specifics in each of these two periods.

For the 1920s, the question of mission and evangelism is considered in the context of the emerging new state and, more importantly, the new communist ideology. Not only did it determine the state of the evangelical movement, but the Russian Orthodox Church as well, which during Russian imperial times was actively engaged in the suppression of the evangelical movement in the Russian Empire. In the 1920s, the situation changed dramatically. Orthodoxy was no longer favoured by a public authority, which relied on communist and atheistic ideology for its legitimization. Even though it is difficult to clearly delineate the role and place of the evangelical movement in the traditionally Orthodox culture, especially when that culture itself was subjected to partial conscious destruction, it can be shown that the idea of spiritual revolution of Russia in such circumstances had its conceptual and practical implementation.

The relationship between the evangelical movement and the state in the 1920s also acquired a special meaning. The government pursued the secularization of society. This resulted in various forms of state intervention in the development of religious communities and movements, including the evangelicals. The omnipresence of the totalitarian state had just started to manifest itself in the 1920s in the newly established Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. However, during this period certain dynamics in the relationship between the evangelical movement and the young Soviet state was already noticeable. Two aspects reflect this dynamic especially expressively - the debate about military service in the midst of the evangelical movement and the creation, development, and subsequent decline of collective farms created by evangelicals in the 1920s.

The issue of the development of the church and church structures in the evangelical

movement in the 1920s was highly relevant, though it originated from the pre-revolutionary period when Unions of Evangelical Christians and Baptists were first created. However, contradictions and conflicts, the inability to fully develop theological schools, and the persecution of church leaders and activists - all these did not contribute to the sustainable development of the churches.

A crucial question is the chronological framework of this period. Any historical periodization is largely conventional. The period of the 1920s, when considered as a certain period of liberalization and stability, can be determined only with a certain degree of conditionality, and its scope does not quite coincide with the formally adopted calendar. It is advisable to consider the spring of 1921 to have been the beginning of the 1920s as a historical period when the New Economic Policy was introduced. Then the Riga Peace Treaty was signed that established peace between the Soviet Ukraine and Russia on the one hand, and Poland on the other, and thus greatly contributed to the attenuation of military operations on the territory of the former Russian Empire. But the civil war continued in the local dimension in the RSFSR until 1923. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was founded in 1922. In a sense, this date may also be considered a landmark for determining the start of the period of the 1920s as a kind of holistic development stage. The end of this period cannot be considered to be in 1930, but rather should be considered to be in April 1929, when the new legislation about cults was adopted by the U.S.S.R., significantly limiting the freedom of conscience and religious organizations. Of course, the repression of the church had existed before that time, but it was after this landmark event when the mass persecution of believers, including evangelicals, actually took place. Thus, historically, the period of the 1920s is still a little shorter than if it was regarded as a calendar period. In describing this period, it is impossible to ignore the events that somehow go beyond its scope, but the main focus of this chapter will remain on the analysis of the trends that were decisive for it.

Another important clarification that should be borne in mind in this case is that this was the period immediately after the First World War, the revolution and the destruction of the Russian Empire. Despite the fact that a new Soviet state was built in its place almost within its previous borders, the very period of social upheaval caused by social and political transformations lasted at least ten years (1914-1923). During that time, people living in the territories of the former Russian Empire went through a collective trauma. The fact that after all these events the Cultural Revolution actually occurred, which resulted in the construction of a new Soviet society and the break in traditions, also contributed to the cultural trauma.

The capacity of the evangelical community to act and form a certain agenda as an agency, which was under the influence of destructive cultural and social forces, was restored during this period.

### **3.2 Mission and Evangelism in New Conditions**

This section explores the solutions Evangelical leaders offered to promote the concept of Spiritual Revolution.

#### **3.2.1 Evangelicalism and Ideological Changes in Revolutionary Russia**

As previously noted, the evangelical movement from its very beginning was formed and developed in opposition to the official Russian Orthodox Church. Orthodoxy was not just the religion of the majority of the subjects in the empire, but the state church. Orthodoxy played an important role in the state ideology; and as the official church it played the role of the institute, educating citizens in loyalty to the empire. Therefore, distraction from Orthodoxy was a punishable offence, and sects that were suspected of it were subjected to severe prosecution. This was also true for evangelical churches that from the outset had been attracting their followers from among the former Orthodox.

As already examined by Heather Coleman, the transition from Orthodoxy to evangelical faith was a difficult decision for each individual. It was usually preceded by an active spiritual search and an awareness of all those social and economic risks, which faced representatives of unacceptable sects in the country (Moiseenko, 2013, p.35). However, people who have gone through evangelical conversion openly rejected the official orthodoxy as ‘living faith,’ and viewed it as ‘dead religion.’ The most valuable things they thought they gained, as a result of their conversion, were salvation, a simple and rational creed, and an ability to lead a respectable and sober lifestyle. These things, in their view were denied them in the Orthodox Church (Coleman, 2005, pp. 47-64).

The Bolsheviks’ harassment of the Orthodox Church was perceived by Evangelicals as a natural fall of the ‘dead’ religion, a kind of debunking of idolatry. In the early 1920s, such debunking seemed to be a good illustration of the righteousness of the evangelical doctrine. Evangelical magazines with enlightening aims reprinted stories on the elimination of Orthodox shrines as centres of superstition. For example, the magazine *Slovo istiny* (Word of Truth) in 1920 described an autopsy of miracle worker Macarius Zhabynskiy’s relics. The information about it was taken from the *Revolutsiya i tserkov’* (Revolution and Church)

magazine. Here it was reported that 'In March 1919 the Commission on behalf of representatives of the Belevsky executive committee and others was directed to the monastery,' which was to perform a disclosure on the shrine with relics:

After much wrangling with the monks the Commission was eventually admitted to the shrine ... Before opening the shrine the Commission asked an abbot if he was sure that the 'relics' really existed and were located there. The abbot, Archimandrite Macarius, said that the 'relics' were there, and he and his brethren were really sure of that as the relics still worked wonders. Complying with the procedures in the presence of more than a hundred believers, the commission started the disclosure of the shrine. After preliminary dismantling of top decorations the cover depicting Macarius was withdrawn, the shrine box was empty, and there was nothing but spiders; when dismantling the scaffold a lot of wood lice were found (1920a).

Further, the article reported that the grave where Macarius was allegedly resting was also excavated and because there were no remains of the saint, 'a group of believers standing there was disappointed' (1920a). The fact that it was placed in the Christian Baptist magazine, it was obvious that such cases were not considered by evangelicals in terms of freedom of religion, but as illustrations of how the Orthodox 'were deceiving people,' drawing away from the true faith. In this sense, the suppression of the Orthodox Church was in favour of the evangelical community. A Bolshevik government was seen as 'an instrument of God.'

Aggressiveness and hostility of the Orthodox Church towards evangelical believers in the Russian Empire were extreme especially in times of K. Pobedonostsev, but also at other times (Savinsky, 1999). Since Orthodoxy relied on the support of the government, the only solution was the separation of church and state, which was proclaimed by the Bolsheviks<sup>23</sup> and was very actively welcomed by representatives of the evangelical movement. This was preceded by the weakening of state structures between the two revolutions (February and October 1917), when Russian Evangelicals experienced the time of freedom and opportunity to influence the political, social, and religious life of society (Murygina, 2008, pp. 92-93). During this time, a very optimistic vision of the future of the evangelical movement emerged, particularly in terms of mission and evangelism. It was also due to the considerable interest in the evangelical doctrine of the people, as evident in the popularity of lectures of Vladimir

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<sup>23</sup> Just three months after the Socialist Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik government led by Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin), issued 'The Decree of Separation between the Church and the State and between the School and the Church.' According to the decree, (1) the church was separated from the government; (2) every citizen could be a part of any religious group or not to belong to any; (3) any persecution against believers was prohibited; (4) all official documents that had any reference to religious beliefs were to be banned; (5) freedom of belief was allowed as long as it did not limit the rights of citizens of the Soviet Republic; (6) nobody could use their religious beliefs to justify civil disobedience; (7) marriage and birth certificates were to be issued by the government; (8) the school was to be separated from the church. Citizens could teach religion to their children as a private matter; (9) religious organizations were banned from owning any property.

Martsinkovsky, as well as other public preachers spreading the gospel doctrine (Martzinkovski, 1929).

Because of the consistently pursued policy of discrimination in society, a suspicious and hostile attitude towards evangelical believers at the household level took hold, especially towards Baptists, who were considered to be a 'dangerous sect' and a 'German faith' (Coleman, 2005, pp. 92-109). This attitude worsened during the World War I, when suspicion of people of German nationality intensified as potential enemies of Russia. So evangelicals and Baptists formed in a rather hostile environment, which affected their attitude to the world. But revolutionary events gave them great hope for the acquisition of religious freedom, and, especially, freedom of mission.

As noted above, it was Ivan Prokhanov who was notable for the clearest vision of the mission at that time. As the leader of Evangelical Christians, he tried as hard as possible to use opportunities for evangelism and influence society at that time. He was the evangelical leader who created the Christian party and the only participant in the elections after the February democratic revolution. Despite the fact that his party was not elected to Parliament, this initiative became a prerequisite for the formation of a complex missionary vision that was being developed by Prokhanov. Andrei Puzynin noted:

According to Prokhanov's understanding, the spiritual vacuum that followed the fall of the Russian monarchy and the untimely death of embryonic democracy as a result of the Bolshevik revolt, put Russia and the whole world before the choice between evangelical reformation and Marxism (Puzynin, 2010, p. 284).

Prokhanov imagined further developments of the post-revolutionary Soviet society in the choice between ideological values. He was convinced that the Gospel values could and would compete with the values of the Bolsheviks and would attract many people to God.

An important component in the missionary and evangelical vision of Prokhanov was the desire for interdenominational unification. At the beginning of the 1920s, he accomplished significant work in order to achieve unification with the Renovationist wing of the Russian Orthodox Church called 'Zhivaya Tserkov' (Living Church). Prokhanov was convinced that the 'Zhivaya Tserkov' (Living Church) was an attempt at inter-orthodox Reformation, and this made it close to the spirit of the evangelical movement. However, political intrigues, which the Bolsheviks resorted to in order to split the Russian Orthodox Church, made the development of relations with this church almost impossible (Pospelovsky, 1995, pp. 89-102). Moreover, even those limited contacts which Prokhanov managed to establish caused disapproval and misunderstanding on the part of the more conservative wing of Orthodoxy, on the one hand, and the Baptists, on the other hand (Savinsky, 2001, p. 97).

Prokhanov, as well as other evangelical leaders' susceptibility to social changes that had occurred as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution, became an important element in the development of a missionary vision. The belief that the political upheaval and economic transformation could also bring spiritual renewal in the Soviet Union and even eventually throughout the world became a characteristic indicator of the willingness of believers to perceive these changes as something positive, to interpret them as new opportunities that were given to them by God. Even at that time, Puzynin believed that Prokhanov was in some way a 'Slavophile' who prophesied the beginning of the Reformation in Russia and its eventual superiority over the European Reformation (Puzynin, 2010, pp. 296-297). According to Prokhanov:

In Russia the construction of the spiritual home was not from above as it was in the West, i.e., from the upper ruling classes of the clergy, but it happened and is happening naturally, i.e., from below, from the depths of the people, as the Church was built in the time of Christ and the Apostles (Prokhanov, 1933,p.167).

Whereas Puzynin remarked:

How to treat this? Of course, as a gratifying phenomenon. This indicates the progress having been made since the Middle Ages and in the restoration of early Christianity ... It is natural that the Russian Evangelical movement has made many steps forward compared to previous Reformations ... In the meantime, full of humility, faith, and spiritual delight, evangelical reformation can say to the former Reformation: 'I went forward in the way that you had gone, and I want to go further. Come with me!' (Puzynin, 2010, p. 296).

Stressing the 'national ethos' of the evangelical church, its origin being from the lower social strata, Prokhanov knowingly or unknowingly paid tribute to the communist ideology of the Bolsheviks. He emphasized that the Russian 'Reformation' was more progressive than the European one, precisely because of its deep connection with the people that it could truly restore the first Christianity as a kind of ideal state of Christianity. If we consider that the Bolsheviks considered 'social rank and file' to be the most progressive layer that is eventually able to build a perfect social order, it becomes clear that Prokhanov largely reflected the paradigm of thinking prevailing at that time. The same applied to other evangelical leaders, particularly Baptists, who tried to understand the connection between the communist ideology inculcated by the Bolsheviks, and Christian doctrine. The main similarity they saw in the teaching about social justice.

During one of the Baptist conferences in Central Russia in 1927, the leader of the Baptist Union, Pavel Pavlov, made a statement that the most fundamental Evangelical ideal of human life is the socialist way of life and that the Bolshevik government had a strong interest in moving in the direction of Socialism. Pavlov even allowed the following remarks, 'We believe that in time peace will come to the whole world. The reason why we do not have

peace is capitalism.’ Conference participants appealed to all Christians to be ready to defend the ideals of the Socialist Revolution and religious freedom. They went as far as urging any Christian serving in state office to abstain from contacts with Baptists that did not support the Bolshevik government. Later Baptist leaders condemned this resolution, calling it heresy (Krapivin, 2003, p. 117).

Pavel Pavlov issued other statements in support of the Bolshevik government. As early as 1919, he spoke about the negative attitude of Christians toward wealth in general. Pavlov stated that when the government takes away wealth from the rich, it actually fulfils the teaching of the Gospel, which supports the view that all earthly riches are given to people by God. He claimed that God loves all people, and therefore wealth is to be equally distributed among them. According to Pavlov, wealthy Christians should not worry when their possessions are taken away from them, for they were not theirs in the first place. They are just managers, while God is the true owner of everything (Krapivin, 2003, p. 33).

Pavlov asserted that the well-being of every human individual is one of the primary tasks of the Socialist society, and therefore he argued that every Christian should be an active Christian socialist (Krapivin, 2003, p. 33). It has to be said in all fairness that the only problem that Pavel Pavlov saw in Soviet Socialism was that its followers were trying to change society by means of violence.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, he suggested that Christians were to stay away from any form of violence. Yet, he still thought that the allegiance of every Christian should be to the government that was closer to practicing principles stated in the Bible (Krapivin, 2003, p. 33).

Attempts to somehow adjust their teaching, adapting it to the new political conditions, cannot be solely the result of pragmatism or an unconscious level of engagement. Rather, it is a theological reinterpretation of the situation the evangelicals were in at the time, and the desire to better understand what the Lord wanted to open for them through the changing circumstances of life. On the other hand, it is not less important that the church elite sought to overcome the stereotype of ‘alien faith,’ which was common in relation to representatives of the evangelical movement. This stereotype was particularly developed at a time when the Orthodox Church had political influence. After the Bolshevik upheaval, the communist ideology itself, which was extended by the new government, was like some new faith. Given

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<sup>24</sup> It has to be pointed out that for some time Russian Evangelicals played with the idea of similarity between Christianity and Communism. The only difference, as they thought, was in means by which ‘Christian Socialism’ could be attained. Violence and revolution were not options that Evangelicals were willing to consider. It took several years before the Bolshevik government realised that the similarities between the two ideologies were significant. They began to see that Baptist doctrines significantly contradicted the ideology of ‘Scientific Socialism,’ in which the priority is given to forcible transformation of social relationships.



this fact, as well as a regime with some favour towards 'sects,' essential prerequisites came into existence, which could overcome this stereotype in the new Soviet society.

The hope of Evangelical believers and, especially, their leaders, was that the evangelical faith would develop freely and would even enjoy special favour with the new government,. In the mid-1920s, among some evangelicals abroad, there even was a common opinion based on the field of mission that the Soviet government treated the Baptists the way the government of the Russian Empire treated the Orthodox Church (Steeves, 1976, pp. 214-215).

### **3.3 Strategy of Evangelism in 1920s**

The issue of mission and evangelism in the evangelical movement was very widely discussed. Evangelical Christians gave considerable attention to evangelism and outreach in 1917 and 1918. Prokhanov and other leaders, called for Christians to be examples of a Christ-like life to promote the Spiritual Revolution in the country (1918f, p. 4). 'The time has come to be awakened' was the defining motto of the Fifth Congress of Evangelical Christians that took place in Moscow in December 1917 – January 1918. The 94 delegates of the congress represented hundreds of churches all over Russia. The agenda of the congress included such important issues as evangelism, the spiritual growth of churches, and training for young preachers. Questions on the agenda were related to mission work, the construction of churches, women's ministries, street ministry, and establishing the Bible institute (Savinsky, 2001, p. 59).

The Sixth Congress of Evangelical Christians of October 1919 had evangelism as its central issue. Church representatives listened to reports of fifty elected evangelists from different parts of the country. The congress decided to raise 6,000 roubles to support their work.

The Seventh Congress of June 1920 again raised the issue of evangelism and missions. The delegates passed a resolution with determination to preach the Gospel from city to city and village to village. Evangelical Christians were determined to preach the Word of Christ to every person living in Russia. The congress commissioned two evangelists to China and India as well as to the Russian nomadic tribes of Nenetz, Komi, Kyrgyz and Kazakh. The Bible seminar was to start in the October of 1920 in Petrograd (formerly St. Petersburg) (Savinsky, 2001, p. 61).

The Eighth Congress of Evangelical Christians of December 1921 in Petrograd had 142 church representatives present (1921d). Having a great concern about spreading the Gospel all

over Russia, the delegates decided to double the number of evangelists so that it would reach 100. Church representatives decided to increase the number of staff officers at the Evangelical Christian Union's headquarters so that the work would be carried on with maximum efficiency. Evangelical Christians were determined to help the poor and those suffering from starvation as well as defend the interests of local churches before the regional governing bodies (Savinsky, 2001, p. 62).

In 1919, Baptists established the Trans Caucasian regional department of the Union, which included churches from Georgia, Armenia and the Southern part of Russia. The Trans Caucasian department saw as its main objective outreach in Georgia and other regions. On 12 March 1919, the Baptist Church in Tiflis (Tbilisi) held its first service in the Georgian language. Since then, every Saturday, the church held one service in Georgian (Savinsky, 2001, p. 52). While various regional congresses and conferences were taking place in different parts of Russia, the Evangelical Christian leader, Ivan Prokhanov, tried to attend as many as possible in order to promote unity among Russian Evangelicals.

In September 1920, Russian Evangelicals held a regional meeting with 103 delegates from churches present. The main point of discussion was the support of evangelistic work in the country. The delegates also discussed the organization of short-term seminars for preachers, the question of literacy and the relationship of Christians and the government. The regional gathering elected nine evangelists, four of whom made a decision to minister without pay. The delegates issued a resolution of complete subordination to the government (Savinsky, 2001, p. 63).

The Fifth Congress of Evangelical Youth took place in Petrograd in 1918. Researchers considered it one of the most important youth gatherings at that time (1918e). Evangelism and its strategy was the number one issue discussed at the congress. One of the resolutions aimed at raising a substantial amount of money to go toward evangelism in the country. The youth also adopted the necessary changes to the bylaws of the organization (Savinsky, 2001, p. 64).

Eventually there was considerable involvement of young Christians in evangelism in Russia. For example, one of the youth teams of 10-12 people from Moscow travelled to various towns and villages in the region with the purpose of singing hymns, preaching and evangelism. The group was arrested once for its activity in one of the locations. On the way back to Moscow, they managed to stop in villages and continue to share the Gospel. Another group of young people from Moscow distributed Christian literature published by Evangelicals in Vytke's parks and public places. The young people held discussions on religious topics, held services and Christian concerts (Mitskevich, 1980).

In 1920, a preacher named Danilov, together with other missionaries, held over 100 services in over 15,000 towns and villages of Saratov Oblast'. Between 1918 and 1919, the number of believers at Saratov Baptist Church doubled (from 100 to 220 members) (1927b). The same year in Orenburg, Timoshenko, one of the evangelical leaders, responded to the invitation of atheists to hold a debate, which resulted in the planting of a new Christian congregation (1921b). In 1919, the Baptist Union of Russia established a regional department with a centre in Samara in order to manage the work of proclaiming the Gospel in the region (Savinsky, 2001, p. 47). The church in Poltava, Ukraine, registered twice as many members after the Socialist Revolution of 1917. Smaller congregations numbering 300 sprang up in different locations within close proximity of the city (Motorina).

The success of the mission and evangelism was not aided in the least by traumatic events of the time - war, famine, and social unrest. The conversions of prisoners of World War I were one of the important results of evangelism. Russian soldiers who had been captured by the German army while away from their homeland and families, searched for the meaning of life and consolation. Many of them accepted the 'new faith' while in captivity (Savinsky, 2001, p. 65). In his memoirs, entitled *Zapiski veruyushchego* (Believer's Notes), Vladimir Martzinkovski wrote that about 2,000 new Evangelical believers came out of German POW camps (Martzinkovski, 1929). After returning home, many shared their faith with families and friends, which resulted in the planting of new churches in different regions of Russia (Savinsky, 2001, p. 66).

V.A. Fetler was one of the POWs whose testimony influenced the direction of life for many Russians. In 1915, the imperial government forced him to leave Russia. While abroad, he founded the committee that worked with Russian POWs. John Mott served as the chairperson of the committee for a number of years (Savinsky, 2001, p. 66).

In 1921, evangelical churches helped those that suffered from starvation in the Russian region of Povolzh'e. The famine affected more than 14 million people, out of which 5.6 million were children (1922). The Baptist Union issued an appeal for help to all its congregations and Christians abroad. It created a special fund for helping people affected by the famine (Savinsky, 2001, p. 47). In spite of famine, Evangelicals did not stop their missionary activity in Russia (S., 1975, p. 1). In April 1921, they held a month of intense mass evangelism throughout different areas of the country (Savinsky, 2001, p. 47) (Murygina, 2008, pp. 92–94). In the fall of 1919, Evangelist Dyk and a group of seven people travelled to the Ukraine to share the Gospel. Regretfully, he was murdered by the *Makhno* militia (Makhno, 1926), which fought for the liberation of Western Ukraine from Soviet domination (2011e). The whole group was forced to kneel and were executed while praying (Motorina).

During the Civil War, there were cases when the evangelists were killed. In 1920, evangelist Schafran was killed by the army fighting the Soviet government in Melitopol', Ukraine (1927a). However, this did not stop the missionaries in their ministry. The following year, 120 delegates travelled from all parts of the Ukraine to Elizavetgrad to establish the Baptist Union of Ukraine with their headquarters in Kiev (1926b).

In 1918-1920, Siberia witnessed an evangelistic explosion. The Siberian Department of the Baptist Union of Russia used all means possible to spread the Gospel in that part of Russia. In June 1919, Baptists held a regional conference for over 60 churches of Siberia (Savinsky, 2001, p. 50). As a result, a number of new Baptist churches were planted in the year following the conference. In 1919, Siberian Baptists started the publication of the *Blagovestnik* (The Herald of Good News) magazine and produced 5,000 copies of the *Golos very* (The Voice of Faith) hymnal (1917-1920s).

In 1920, Tregubov, one of the activists, went even further by initiating the creation of the Baptist-Communist Party and the Party of Peaceful Communists (Krapivin, 2003, p. 38). These movements stood for the cause of helping the poor by providing them with food and clothing and increasing the production of goods by means of farming. They fought against prostitution and advocated the cause of the hungry, physically sick and street children (Krapivin, 2003, p. 38).

In 1921, Baptist leaders of Russia decided to hold a two-week countrywide evangelistic campaign from 15-31 January 1922. The goal of the campaign was to share with the population the role of Christianity in social life and basic Christian beliefs (Timoshenko). Baptists were enthusiastic about the campaign and provided financial support by collecting a special offering in their churches. Reports indicated that the two weeks of evangelism were fruitful, especially in Central Russia (1921c).

One of the priorities of Russian Baptists was training new evangelists and leaders. They cared about passing the torch of faith and evangelistic zeal to the new generation of believers. To contribute to the training process in 1923, Vasiliy Pavlov, who at the time was more than seventy years old, started short-term seminars and lectures for younger evangelists. As a result, thirty-six evangelists went through the training and entered the mission field in Russia.

Correspondence coming from different parts of Russia indicated that evangelistic efforts were successful and that great numbers of people experienced conversion. One letter from Moldovina indicated that in the town of Kozlovo, 'The Word of God was proclaimed in town. The church consists of eight believers with thirty-five attending worship services. The room where services take place is quite crowded' (Moldovina, 1925).

The Baptist Congress that took place in the Ukraine on 12-17 May 1925 passed the following resolution regarding missionary activity: 'Missions means commissioning of evangelists to proclaim the Gospel. This should be our major priority. Everything else should be treated as secondary. We should continue our exemplary work so that people can contribute to this cause, which is important to all of us' (1925d).

*The Baptist Magazine* in the issue from February 1926 reports that 34 Baptist evangelists were ministering in Siberia. Altogether, they ministered for 4,250 days visiting 1,150 towns and villages. They travelled by railroad, horses or walked. The total distance travelled is estimated to be over 85,000 kilometres (52,816 miles). Evangelist Skholokhovskiy covered over 1,300 kilometres on his bicycle. Missionary Podsefniy walked over 140 kilometres. The years 1924 and 1925 were especially fruitful as missionaries travelled throughout Siberia while Baptist churches supplied enough funding to cover the costs of the work (1926d).

Baptist zeal for evangelism was evident from an article in the *Baptist Magazine* (June 1926), which encouraged every Christian and every church to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. The idea was that every Christian in his or her own weakness, with prayer and everything he or she possessed, was to participate in missionary work in Russia (1926a).

Evangelical Christians also put a lot of effort into preparing missionaries. In 1924 the 'Khristianin' (Christian) magazine published Prohanov's speech entitled 'Indepth Work', which he presented at Leningrad Bible Institute in June of that year, and which was devoted to the service of the gospel. Here are some essential points of this edifying speech:

A great honor, a great happiness - to work and struggle for God, for spreading the gospel and establishing the kingdom of God and in the hearts of people ... Our participation in His work gives us the rays of His glory. Carrying His Cross here, we will have His crown there ... The essence of the calling of Gospel workers is expressed by Lord in the following words, 'will make you fishers of men' (Matthew 4:19). This essence is fishing for souls. We have to be fishers of souls. There are successful fishers and unsuccessful. Some catch a lot while others catch a little. Preaching of some is always accompanied by conversion of souls, while preaching of others is very often without any fruit. We all want to be successful fishers... For successful fishing of human souls the following conditions must be met: Wisdom and knowledge are necessary... Fish vary in size, habits, location, etc. Therefore, there are many different ways to catch: some are caught on the hook, the others - with a drag-net or just nets, thirds are captured with the use of a harpoon, etc. In the spiritual life, older people need to be passed on the gospel message in one language, young - in the other; educated or uneducated, infected with extreme disbelief or impregnated with superstition, they all need the word of God to be proclaimed to them with their characteristics being taken into account (1924a).

The author further points out that such workers also needed an 'unobtrusive approach' for the souls being caught, should 'love to work', have 'courage and self-sacrifice', and 'patience.' It was necessary to avoid ado and not to resort to advertising their service, because 'loud promotional activities leave behind traces of bitter disappointment.' He offered 'to fish at depth', explaining it in such a way that one must strive to catch souls 'at a depth of people's

life, i.e. in the thinking part of the people: public figures, workers of science and art,' as well as at depth of one's own self-awareness and knowledge of the Word of God. (1924a).

As Sinichkin pointed out that in December 1923, the collegium of the Baptist Union had 65 paid and more than 1000 unpaid evangelists. Due to financial difficulties in 1923, the Union could provide financial support to only 12 evangelists, in 1925 – 50, and in 1926 - 22 preachers being at the disposal of the Union Council. Regional Baptist alliances which numbered 8 in 1926, kept 120 paid evangelists (Sinichkin, 2011b, pp. 183-185).

The Union of Evangelical Christians kept 50 paid preachers in the autumn of 1919, and by December 1921 the number doubled. In all churches and unions it was required to support evangelists by a collection of funds. By 1928, the Union of Evangelical Christians kept up to 600 missionaries, 100 of whom were at the disposal of the Union, and 500 operated under the auspices of the 52 provincial and district departments (Krapivin, 2003, p. 68).

Of course, this number of evangelists cannot be considered significant for a country with a population of over one hundred million people, but their very presence and the coherent strategy of the mission made the evangelical doctrine noticeable. Evangelicals and their leaders had done everything possible to use the post-revolutionary period for evangelism and mission. They were convinced that God had opened to them the possibility of evangelism.

### **3.4 Mission and Evangelism: Results**

In view of the fragmented and incomplete sources, today it is quite difficult to have a complete picture of the missionary activity of evangelicals in the 1920s in the U.S.S.R. The results of the above mentioned missionary activities cannot be measured solely by figures reflecting the number of people added to the church membership. A person coming to an evangelical church could not only be the result of exposure to the Gospel preaching, but was also related to personal and even interested motives, for example, to avoid military service. Whatever the internal motives were, adding to the Church could not have happened if it had not been for the preaching the Gospel. Speaking of the immediate results of mission and evangelism, one would still have to rely on quantitative indicators of the growth of churches.

The documents indicate that in the evangelical community of that time, conversation about spiritual awakening was a common occurrence, the signs of which were seen in the visible success of spreading the evangelical faith. *Slovo istiny*, the Evangelical magazine, reported on the results of missionary trips and sermons:

Brother G.I. Mazayev reports the following: 'In Siberia, work in the field of the Lord is, thank God, successful; there are more conversions into the way of the Lord than ever before. One fraternal settlement baptised 118 members on the day of the Holy Trinity; on the occasion of the bad weather people could not

come from the surrounding communities, where over 300 souls were intended to be baptised' ... From Solntseva, city of Kursk, br. Belyaev writes: 'The Lord has given us a revival, especially among youth. Every Sunday a few souls turn to the Lord and in a short time we have baptised thirty one person and twenty more souls expressed their willingness to be baptised. Many requests to be baptised come from surrounding villages, where there are absolutely no believers. On the second day of Pentecost about three thousand spectators came. The people listened with great interest to the Word of God and singing of our Community the choir. When I walked into the river to baptise, many, because of the crowd, got into the water to see better. Everyone accompanied us from the river with great gratitude, many were talking about the new phenomenon ...'(1920b, p. 23).

*Slovo istiny* in 1921 reported, 'In a short period of time in completely new places the preaching of the Gospel resulted in the planting of large Evangelical congregations' (1921a) (1918g, p. 5). Large means a congregation of one hundred plus members.

In this regard it should be noted that the increase in the number of church members and churches had been uneven in different periods and in different regions of the country. These figures were very strongly influenced by revolutionary events and war. It is estimated that in 1917 the total number of Evangelical Christians and Baptists in the former Russian Empire numbered 150-200 thousand people. From 1917-1924 the number of Baptist congregations increased in Voronezh by 5 times, in Siberia – by 2.6 times, in the Far East – by 4 times. From 1924 to 1926 the growth further increased, mainly among rural populations. The Ukraine reported 15 per cent growth in the number of churches in 1926 (1927e, p. 66). In the Caucasus the growth during that time was 6 percent (Sinichkin, 2011a, pp. 82-83).

From available archival information, we see that dozens of people were receptive to the preaching of the Gospel. For example, the Russian Far East is the example of fruitful evangelistic work in the 1920s. In July 1920, Baptists in the Far East held a conference where they reported that in 1918-1920 the membership of the Blagoveshchensk Baptist Church had grown to 600 members while churches in Alexandrovo and Khabarovsk boasted between 250 and 300 members each (1920c). New churches were planted in Komsomol'sk-na-Amure and other Far Eastern towns (Savinsky, 2001, p. 50). In June 1921, Baptists held a conference in Blagoveshchensk led by Vins with 80 representatives of local churches. According to the conference report, in 1920 Far Eastern Baptist churches admitted 4,000 new members (History of Baptists in Far-Eastern Russia). At this conference, delegates formed the Union of Baptists of Far-Eastern Russia. The reason for this was the change of the legal status of Baptist churches in Soviet Russia. The numerical growth of Baptist churches was the outcome of equal rights which Baptists and the once-privileged Russian Orthodox Church received from the Soviet government (Karev, 1957, p. 20).

Similar processes were taking place in other regions as well. Saratov Baptist Church doubled in size between 1922 and 1923. Twenty-three people were baptised in 1922 and fifty-four in 1923. New congregations were planted all over central Russia. By 1925, there were

sixty Baptist churches in Saratov Oblast' (1925a). The availability of 50,000 copies of New Testaments brought into Soviet Russia with the permission of the government was a great help in the Evangelical outreach. All copies of the New Testament were distributed (Savinsky, 2001, p. 81).

In 1925, Baptist churches numbered 400,000 baptized members, not including some of the family members, who also were believers. In 1928, according to the data of the Federal Baptist Union, Baptists in Russia numbered close to 500,000. It is worthy to note that the state statistics confirm these numbers (Putintsev, 1926, p. 46).

According to other data, at the beginning of 1926, there were 3000-3200 Baptist congregations (400,000 members, not counting family members), 1,100 houses of prayer, 600 pastors and 1400 other ministers and by mid-1926 - 6500 congregations (500,000 members). By the fourth World Congress of Baptists (June, 1928) further detailed calculations were made, which gave more modest results: 4,000 congregations, 900 pastors, about 2,000 members. On 1 January 1929 the number of active members of the Baptist church in the Russian Union was 200 thousand people. If family members and parishioners attending prayer meetings who were not members of the congregation were included, it was estimated that one million people were linked to the Baptist church. The number of ministers was 2044 (Sinichkin, 2011a, p. 187).

With respect to members of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians, the statistics are also unclear. In August 1923, their number together with followers was estimated at about 2 million people. On 1 January 1929, according to the data of the Supreme Council of the Union of Evangelical Christians, the number of active members was 300 thousand people. However, with family members and parishioners who attended prayer meetings but who were not baptized yet and therefore not members of the church, it is estimated that approximately 1.2 million people had links with the Evangelical Union. Ministers – 3000 people (Sinichkin, 2011a, p. 188).

According to atheistic sources, the Baptist faith attracted large numbers of peasants. After the Socialist Revolution, peasants received plots of land from the state, including Baptists peasants. Economically strong and sound Baptist communes naturally attracted peasants with their cooperation and mutual assistance programmes. According to Marxist propagandists, the *kulaks* that were small farmers and landowners joined Baptist communes to gain some legal ground for anti-socialist work. The example of that was the New Economic Policy of the 1920s that contributed toward the increase in the numbers of Baptists in Russia.

The decree of the Soviet government concerning exemption to military service contributed to the numeric growth of Evangelical churches in the country. Baptist opponents



were of the opinion that the numbers of people who joined the churches were not interested in Baptist beliefs and practices, but rather to benefit from the new legislation to avoid military conscription.

It should be kept in mind that the figures that are given by sources both directly evangelical and atheistic are very rough. At that time the authors of both camps had reasons to inflate these figures - evangelical leaders to show the success of the mission and the effectiveness of their ministry, and Bolshevik activists to show a 'threat' of the mass distribution of sectarianism they sought to prevent. Therefore, there is reason to believe that millions attending prayer meetings at the Baptist and evangelical Christians' churches were a slight exaggeration. However, even if these figures are accurate, they still do not give a reason to talk about an extraordinary success of an 'evangelical spiritual revolution.' The growing number of church members was rather uneven. Its dynamic was not strictly positive and there were gains and losses. Taking into account the total population of the U.S.S.R., which, according to the All-Union census of 1926, was slightly more than 147 million people (1926c), the number of evangelical believers, even under the most optimistic calculations, barely reached 1.5%.

The sources referred to indicate that a spiritual awakening took place at this time. They also show that there were circumstances that hindered it. Most of these circumstances arose because of the atheistic Bolshevik policy. The policy and the relationship of evangelical denominations with the Soviet state will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

### **3.5 Evangelicals and the Soviet Government**

The topic of relations with the Soviet government is the most developed of all aspects of the history of the evangelical movement in the former U.S.S.R. Historians tend to believe that it is the public authorities that were an active force in shaping the agenda for the religious denominations in the U.S.S.R. The state of affairs in the religious sphere depended on them and they set the framework within which religious communities could develop and move forward. In addition, due to their close attention to the 'religious issue,' many documents and materials relating to the status of denominations have been preserved. It is due to the relatively 'liberal' policies of the Bolshevik state in relation to the evangelical movement that these years are called the 'Golden Age' in the history of Russian Evangelicals (1918–1928) (Murygina, 2008). Yet, taking the state policy into account, this title is disputed by some modern historians (Prokhorov, 2007).

Offering a synopsis of the results of the October Revolution of 1917, Robert Service wrote:

In the year and a half after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks had laid the foundations for a unique state that lasted in Russia for seven decades and was the model for Communist regimes covering a third of the inhabited world after the Second World War. There was a single ruling party. There was a politically subordinate legislature, executive and judiciary. The party in reality was the supreme state agency and Lenin in all but name was the supreme leader of that agency (Service, 2000, p. 391).

The years immediately following the Socialist Revolution of 1917 were marked by decline in the life of religious institutions. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were aiming at 'constructing the socialist order' (Dowswell, 2004, p. 30). According to Dowswell:

Now that they were in power, Lenin's Bolsheviks set about transforming Russian society. Factories, banks, and land were claimed by the state. Law courts and town councils were replaced with 'People's Tribunals' and local soviets. The Church, a central pillar of the Tsarist regime, was allowed to continue its routines and customs, but its lands were confiscated and religious teaching was banned in schools (Dowswell, 2004, p. 30).

The Soviet government launched anti-religious propaganda, which was aimed at the destruction of church life in Soviet Russia (Service, 2009b, pp. 200-201). The Russian Orthodox Church was weakened. Because of the edict that proclaimed the separation of the church and state, religious education of children in schools was prohibited (Murygina, 2008, pp. 92–93). Philip Boobbyer wrote:

After 1917, the Soviet state made a clear attempt to destroy the religious loyalties of its population. Churches were closed, priests were shot or imprisoned and, with collectivisation of the peasants, the rural foundations of Russian religious life were all but destroyed (Boobbyer, 1999, p. 374).

The question remains important, as to which factors prompted the Soviet government to tolerate the Evangelical movement.

In his speech at the Congress of the BWA in July of 1923 in Stockholm, Pavel Pavlov addressed the issue of the relationship between Russian Baptists and the Soviet government. He pointed out that Russian Baptists enjoyed religious freedom. Persecutions that were taking place here and there were not systematic in character. They could be characterized as side effects of the Civil War. The arrest of Christian leaders and church members under the pretext of political disloyalty mostly ended with their release. Pavlov praised the Soviet authorities for exempting Baptists from the military service. He pointed out that the Soviet government was open to Baptist contributions to publications in the press and that it let Baptists publish *Slovo istiny* magazine (Pavlov, 1923).

Pavlov's way of presenting the power of the Bolsheviks as friendly towards evangelical believers was already ideologically biased. It was an attempt to justify many facts of discrimination against believers, to embellish the situation in the sphere of the religious policy of the Soviet state. The relationship between the evangelical movement and the power of the

Bolsheviks was much more complex. The key issue was the collective farms, in the organization of which evangelicals and their leaders took a very active part at the time.

### **3.6 Evangelical Agricultural Communes and Cooperatives**

The creation of collective farms (Rus. *kolkhozy*), agricultural communes, artisan cooperatives - in various fields, especially in agriculture and small craft, was considered by the Bolsheviks to be a strategic task in reforming the country's economy, in transforming it into socialism. However, in the 1920s, the creation of such communes was in some sense a trial process that did not have centralized and coercive nature yet, as it did in the 1930s. It was a time of relative liberalism in the economy, known as the New Economic Policy. Authorities hoped that the process of collectivization of farms would go largely independently, on the initiative 'from below', as the new 'communist' state would be developing. In view of this and other reasons, it did not obstruct and even encouraged the start of various kinds of collective establishments, such as agricultural communes, artisan cooperatives, and TOZs (agricultural associations). Evangelical Christians, especially their leaders, saw this as a new opportunity to organize their lives in accordance with their views and develop missionary activities. The Soviet government offered its support to the Evangelicals by granting them permission to form agricultural communes and artisan cooperatives. Thus, the 1920s saw an interesting phenomenon arise in the life of Russian Evangelicals: the establishment of agricultural communes functioning according to the principles of communism (S., 1975, p. 4). This phenomenon came into existence because of the decree of the Soviet government, which granted free land and large estates to Russian religious minorities, including Evangelicals. Evangelicals responded to such a generous gift with the establishment of faith-based agricultural communities. Researching the activities of Evangelical communes, the Soviet propagandist I. Morozov indicated, 'In Armavirskiy Rayon (Northern Caucasus), Baptists founded a commune named *Friedenrecht*. They used the proceeds to support religious causes. They even constituted to give ten percent of proceeds to support "the work of the Gospel". Some of the members pay their dues to sectarian centres' (Morozov, 1931b, pp. 19-20).

Early on, Evangelicals had dreamt of starting their own agricultural communes. Their attempt to start such communes prior to the Socialist Revolution of 1917 failed because of harsh persecution from the Orthodox Church and the government. When the Bolsheviks came to power in the country and passed the Land Decree, interest in the establishment of Evangelical agricultural communes skyrocketed. Russian Evangelicals initially welcomed positive changes introduced and contributed to by the Soviet government. They supported

communal ownership because to them it matched the life of the early church found in the Book of Acts.<sup>25</sup> Through the communal work, evangelical Christians wanted to show their fellow citizens a new way of life in a new country (Savinsky, 2001, p. 23). The model received the name *Christian Socialism* and enjoyed overwhelming Evangelical support in the 1920s. Overall, only a few of such communes survived and became truly successful. Their efforts show that Evangelicals tried to make an impact upon the country in which they lived and participated in the reconstruction of society.

On 5 October, 1921, the Soviet government, on advice from Vladimir Bonch-Bruyevich, who was in the leadership at the time, invited Russian Evangelicals, as well as believers from abroad and promised free land confiscated from the nobility because of the Socialist Revolution. The government invited Evangelicals to take part in the newly formed collective farms.

Bonch-Bruyevich stressed that Russian Evangelicals were not a cult. They existed in the country before the Socialist Revolution and endured persecutions, living in their own different way from the rest of society. Bonch-Bruyevich pointed out common ideas that communists shared with the Evangelicals. The letter addressed to Russian Protestants contained a promise that the government of workers and peasants stood for freedom of conscience<sup>26</sup> (Krapivin, 2003, pp. 78, 148).

On 15 November, 1921, Tregubov published an article in *Izvestiya*, 'Evangelicals as Builders of the New Communist Lifestyle' (Krapivin, 2003, p. 78). He wrote that thousands who belonged to the Evangelical movement had stood against the bourgeoisie and, therefore, could help overcome the spirit of individual ownership and selfishness. Soon after the publication of Tregubov's article, the Soviet government began to give free land to evangelicals in Russia and the Ukraine. Land in the Northern Caucasus was given to several immigrant groups that repatriated from Uruguay and the United States of America<sup>27</sup> (Krapivin, 2003, p. 79).

The free offer of land did not generate a mass response among Evangelical Christians. It attracted some Spiritual *Molokans* (Rus. *dukhovnye molokane*) as well as those that were not a part of the Evangelical movement. The lack of response was due to the fact that some Evangelicals did not feel right about taking ownership of land that was confiscated by the

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<sup>25</sup> 'All the believers were together and had everything in common.' (Acts 2:44, NIV)

<sup>26</sup> This open invitation to believers was published in *Izvestiya* newspaper on 19 October, 1921. The Soviet government also published it as a separate booklet with the circulation of over 50,000 copies. On 25 January, 1922, the same information was published in the Ukrainian press.

<sup>27</sup> Repatriates included the *Novoiyerusalim* (New Jerusalem) group.

Soviet government from other people. Nevertheless, in the 1920s, the Northern Caucasus had over 1,000 collective farms that were considered Christian. Some of them belonged to the Evangelicals while others did not. According to the researcher, Krapivin, the total number of farmers was over 80,000 people (Krapivin, 2003, p. 80).

In 1921, the Land Department of the Bolshevik government charged a special commission with the task of imparting the land to Evangelicals. One of the members of the commission studied the Baptist movement in Russia prior to the Socialist Revolution and promoted interests of the Evangelical movement within the Soviet government.

Soviet publications from 1923-1924 indicated that Bonch-Bruyevich initiated the whole plan but it did not materialize entirely in the way the Soviet government had intended it to be. As Sawatsky commented:

Initially, the Soviet government, due largely to the influence of the sectarian expert Bonch-Bruyevich (who was also Lenin's secretary) took a friendly attitude toward the Evangelical sectarians and even hoped to cooperate with them in the building of socialism. In addition, because the Evangelicals drew the bulk of their converts from Orthodoxy, their help should help the government in breaking the back of Orthodoxy (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 37).

The First Baptist communes were established in 1918 in Priluch'e in Novgorod region and Vassan on the Yenisei River: Gethsemane, Bethany and Morning Star (Rus. *Utrennyaya zvezda*). Additional communes were established in Tver region, while Sigor and Idino communes were founded in Bryansk region. The Bethany commune was started prior to 1920. By 1925, Evangelical Christians boasted close to 100 communes that belonged to them. About 25 more belonged to the Baptist Union (Coleman, 2005, p. 175).

The idea of Evangelical communes was actively carried out by Prokhanov, who saw in this the embodiment of his ideas about a spiritual revolution and reformation. Prokhanov wished to establish Christian communes, which could serve as models of exemplary collective work for the rest of society. Prokhanov and Evangelical leaders wrote the basic rules for the communes. The working day began with prayer. Christian workers ate together three times a day with the same kind of food served to everyone. A time of common worship usually ended each workday. An experienced elder was usually appointed to lead the commune. Prokhanov went on to compose Christian hymns inspired by the communes (Savinsky, 2001, p. 24). Evangelical communes reminded Prokhanov of the early church, and therefore this theme became prevalent in many of the songs written by him (1918d) (Coleman, 2005, p. 175) (Savinsky, 2001, p. 24).

In addition to agricultural communities, Evangelicals established various city cooperatives. One example of this is a cooperative of Baptist farmers, carpenters and blacksmiths established after the Socialist Revolution of 1917 in Siberia. In spite of difficulties experienced by Christians at the time of the war, twenty-three families joined

forces and acquired ownership of a workshop and equipment. The Baptist leader, Vasiliy Pavlov, was actively involved in promoting the Christian cooperative movement (Coleman, 2005, p. 176). Some cooperatives were formed spontaneously in different parts of Russia as an expression of initiatives from local Evangelicals.

Baptist construction workers, shoemakers and bankers formed cooperatives in different Russian cities. In Moscow, Baptist cooperatives ran six cafeterias, one of which was located at the headquarters of the Baptist Union, and another in a building belonging to the Soviet government. Baptists provided catering to participants of various governmental meetings and functions. One of the cooperatives in Gomel, Belorussia was called *Betonit* (Concrete Works) while another in Moscow existed under the name *Chestnyi truzhennik* (Honest Worker). A bakery chain in Rzhev had a biblical name *Sarepta*. It sold bread products in two retail stores. In Moscow, members of the Baptist church owned six restaurants under the name of *Pishcheprodukt* (Food Production) (Coleman, 2005, p. 176). They provided food services for the delegates participating in Bolshevik congresses. Several well-known Baptist leaders, including Ivanov, were members of the restaurant chain board.

In 1922, the Baptist Union founded the *Bratskaya pomoshch'* (Brotherly Help) committee with the purpose of supporting the agricultural communities and Christian cooperatives. It had 14 different departments.

In the mid-1920s, the Tolstoyan and officer of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, Ivan Tregubov, proposed to the Soviet government the idea of a centre that would unite all Christian cooperatives and agricultural communes under one umbrella. He had plans to produce two publications, one of which was to be called *Peaceful Communists* and the other *Communist Christian Sect*. On 27 May 1924, Tregubov approached the Baptist Union with the proposal of financial support for the publications. He received a negative response. The Soviet government gave him the same answer (Krapivin, 2003, p. 43).

The All-Russian Evangelical Christian Union was a visionary movement whose leaders desired to transform the lives of ordinary Russians and contribute toward a change in society. Experiments in social life were the driving force of the movement in the 1920s. Prokhanov compared the establishment of cooperatives and communes to the new way of life for Russian Evangelicals. According to him, the vision of a new society was based upon several pillars: collective labour, creativity, cleanliness and sobriety. Evangelical leaders published guidelines of how to care for gardens and individual homes. The idea of this publication was to show that Evangelical Christians led not only an exemplary spiritual life, but also set an example by leading a worthy everyday life.

With the help of a colleague, Prokhanov embarked upon an expedition to Siberia (Altay), where he surveyed sites for the establishment of an ideal settlement of Evangelical Christians, to be called Sun City (Rus. *gorod solntsa*). There are references to the same place under the name of *Evangel'sk* (The Good News City). When Prokhanov came back to Leningrad, he continued working on establishing Sun City.

To the regret of many, Sun City was never built because of a governmental decision to terminate this project at the end of the 1920s. Nevertheless, the very idea of establishing a city for Evangelicals speaks about the vision that Russian Evangelicals had in order to transform society after the Socialist Revolution of 1917. The city was to be an example of Christian Socialism and collective work.

During the initial 'honeymoon' period between Evangelicals and the Bolshevik government, Christians were supportive of some of the major state policies and tried to prove how valuable their presence was for Soviet society. In 1925, Ivanov-Klyshnikov published an article, in which he wrote about the socio-economic importance of Christian initiatives. He stated that evangelicals should be seen as a valuable segment of the population upon which the new Socialist government could rely. Ivanov-Klyshnikov pointed out similarities between Socialism and the collective work of Evangelicals that were developing in communes and cooperatives at that time. 'We enjoy the new forms of socio-economic life. We have no reason to avoid the new way of life' (1925a).

It should be noted that all the optimistic work of establishing communes, cooperatives, and Sun City was done in spite of the continuing harassment of Evangelicals. The Socialist Revolution led to the decline in religious sentiments in Russia. As a result, Christian communes did not last long. Most of them ceased to exist by the end of the 1920s for several reasons: one being that atheists began to bombard the Christian communal movement with sophisticated propaganda. Viewed as a threat to the socialist way of life and the construction of a new Soviet society, the government gradually began the process of closing Christian communes. Bolsheviks objected to these communes serving as an evangelistic tool (1924b).

There were several major factors that ultimately led to the failure of Christian agrarian projects. First, the local governing bodies did not exhibit enthusiasm when considering people from other regions of Russia coming to their land (Krapivin, 2003, p. 81). Second, there was a vehement strife between Evangelical farms and Soviet collective farms. In this competition, faith-based communes were often superior. Third, Evangelical communes had a different ideology and relationship between their members than the collective farms (Rus. *Kolkhozy*) initiated by the government. Christian communes were resisting the growing ideological influence from the Soviet State. According to reports published at the time,

'Christian communes were separated from the life of society. They did not have any fellowship with nearby government established collective farms and settlements.'

Once the state realized that Evangelicals had substantial differences in ideology with the Bolshevik regime, it launched severe persecutions against them (Murygina, 2008, pp. 92–93). One of the anti-religious propagandists, I. Morozov, while writing against the establishment and promotion of the Evangelical cooperatives, wrote, 'Sectarian cooperatives and communes played an important role for their movement. Those were organizations that saved the very life of sectarians. They generated income for the purpose of furthering religious propaganda and support of evangelists' (Morozov, 1931b, p. 12). Russian Evangelicals continued to influence the life of society even after the October Revolution of 1917 in spite of renewed persecutions from the Bolshevik government.

As a result of the propaganda, the government began to accuse Christians of attempts to destroy the Socialist economy. Sectarians were blamed for pushing people to the limits and indifference toward the needs of peasants. P.V. Ivanov-Klyshnikov, one of the Evangelical leaders, painted another picture (Ivanov-Klyshnikov, 1925). According to him, the commune of Christians united not in the name of general good, but for the sake of a higher ideal, such as spiritual growth. Ivanov-Klyshnikov stated that collective farms represented 'interesting attempts to create new forms of economic activity apart from God and under the badge of open atheism.' He admonished non-believers 'to take into account the experience of people led by God who achieved the results, which all today's society is striving for' (Ivanov-Klyshnikov, 1925). As he continued the Christian community was called a commune 'with resilient structure that was not limited by any consolidated regulations. Our communities represent a family of spirit and unity, in which everyone helps his friend and encourages his brother to hold on' (Ivanov-Klyshnikov, 1925).

### **3.7 Evangelicals in Competition with the Bolshevik Government**

In spite of what seemed like close cooperation between Russian Evangelicals and Bolsheviks, by the end of the 1920s the 'honeymoon' between them came to an abrupt end. Anatoly Lunacharskiy, one of the atheist lecturers and main Bolshevik ideologues branded Russian Evangelicals as 'the most dangerous religious form, especially when it becomes revolutionary or socialist in its nature' (Krapivin, 2003, p. 104). It is hard not to agree with the valid argument of Geoffrey Hosking who asserted that in essence, some of the principles of Communists and Evangelicals were quite similar. However, Evangelicals posed a threat to the Bolshevik ideology because 'their morality - hard work, self-discipline, sobriety, mutual aid -



was close to the official morality which the Communists preached but did not practise' (Hosking, 1992, p. 238).

After the Bolshevik leadership in Moscow accepted a number of drastic measures against Russian Protestants in 1927, a rapid deterioration in the relationship followed. *Pravda* (the Truth), the communist newspaper, as well as *Bezbozhnik* (Atheist), carried articles that condemned the growth of the Evangelical movement. Authors of these publications called for an end to the Christian revolutionary movement. They asserted that all that Evangelicals wanted was to create divisions in the Socialist government and society (Krapivin, 2003, p. 109). Such accusations were groundless because initially Evangelicals welcomed the Socialist Revolution, which satisfied most of their demands. Some Evangelical property owners gave up their land to the state, as was the case with Gagarina who transferred her land to the authorities of Tul'skaya Guberniya<sup>28</sup> (Savinsky, 2001, p. 21).

In spite of their support for the new Socialist government, Russian Evangelicals disagreed with Bolsheviks over the issue of the ownership of church buildings, or 'Houses of Prayer.' Because of the struggle between the Socialist government and Russian Orthodox Church, a law was passed in 1919 stipulating that religious organizations were to transfer the ownership of all property to the government. Likewise, since Evangelical-Christians and Baptist unions fell under the umbrella of religious organizations, they had to meet the requirements of the new law.

According to archival documents from 1919, Evangelicals argued in favour of having a privileged status regarding the property they owned. The strength of their argument rested upon the fact that their houses of prayer were not built with the participation of Russia's imperial government, but by ordinary working people. Therefore, they argued, how could they return workers' money to the government (Krapivin, 2003, p. 46)?

Evangelicals and atheists held a number of open debates, lectures, and discussions, which did not always end in favour of atheists. As time went by, some government officials became irritated by this and began to express their opposition toward the Evangelical movement (Savinsky, 2001, p. 20).

In spite of changing attitudes toward Evangelicals, at the 26<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Russian Baptist Union in 1926, its secretary, Vasiliy Ivanov-Klyshnikov, stated that Baptists 'recognised, obeyed, and supported' the Bolshevik government (Savinsky, 2001, p. 22). Russian delegates at the Third World Baptist Congress in Stockholm in 1923, demanded the placement of the Soviet flag on the podium (next to flags of other countries), as evidence of

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<sup>28</sup> Evangelical Christian Savel'ev gave up his factory to the Bolshevik government.

the close cooperation between Evangelicals and the government of Soviet Russia (Savinsky, 2001, p. 22). However, there is evidence that testifies to the contrary. At the congress, Pavel Pavlov was not entirely free to speak his mind regarding the persecution of Evangelicals by the Soviet government. According to one of the directives of the special commission overseeing religious affairs, 'those delegates who would exhibit undesirable attitudes and behaviours are not to be allowed to return home' (Popov, 1996, p. 256).

In 1924, the Bolshevik Party proposed the following measures to limit the growth of Russian Evangelicals and to block their influence upon society: (1) The legalization of churches to be made more difficult. The state to require congregations to meet all government requirements and regulations and to pay taxes. Male members of churches of appropriate age to serve in the military. (2) Methods used against Evangelicals to be different from those used against the Russian Orthodox Church because of functional differences in leadership between the two movements. (3) Evangelicals not to be offered any privileges. (4) Government representatives to attend closed membership meetings. (5) The state to limit the number of pastors and evangelists permitted to preach only within the four walls of their own churches. (6) Evangelicals to be prohibited from voicing their opinions regarding all non-religious topics (such as healthcare and agriculture). (7) Local governments were not to offer any privileged status to Evangelical collective farms and communes (Krapivin, 2003, p. 108; (Murygina, 2008, p. 92).

The Bolshevik secret police (Rus. *VCHK*)<sup>29</sup> joined the *Komsomol* in tracking incidents in which Evangelicals tried to engage large numbers of young people in what they labelled as 'anti-Soviet'<sup>30</sup> (Krapivin, 2003, p. 76). Leaders of the *VCHK*, (later it was named *GPU* and *NKVD*), were in favour of implementing repressive measures against the leaders of the Evangelical movement as early as 1921. However, certain Bolsheviks, including Mikhail Kalinin and Vladimir Bonch-Bruyevich, opposed them successfully at first. Kalinin and Bonch-Bruyevich were in favour of special treatment of Russian Evangelicals, who, as they knew, differed from the Russian Orthodox by representing mainly working people and peasants.

According to Kalinin and Bonch-Bruyevich, the government needed the help of Evangelicals to promote its policies, especially in the countryside (Krapivin, 2003, p. 76). In

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<sup>29</sup> Rus. *Vserossiyskaya chrezvychaynaya komissiya (VCHK)*, later it was named *GPU* and *NKVD*.

<sup>30</sup> The secret memo of *VCHK* was issued as early as 1921.

spite of this patronage, Ivan Prokhanov was arrested on 5 April, 1923 for promoting unity among different religious groups<sup>31</sup> (Blumenay, 1930, p.7; Zdorovets, 2002, p. 9).

With the departure of the 'old guard' of the Bolshevik party, who had a favourable attitude toward Evangelicals, the persecution intensified. The government alleged that Evangelicals held views that supported the old imperial regime (Krapivin, 2003, p. 86). In his dissertation, Nikolai Krylov indicated that capitalistic elements in society launched fierce resistance against constructing a Socialist society. Vladimir Lenin warned of a fight to the death, which would be of greater intensity than the struggle against the Vice-Admiral of the Navy and head of the White anti-Bolshevik Movement Alexander Kolchak and Supreme Commander of South Russia's Armed Forces Anton Denikin (Krylov, 1960, p. 166).

The Commission on Religious Affairs and the secret police assumed a large portion of responsibility over religious affairs in Soviet Russia. With Lenin's death in January 1924, the Bolsheviks began to deviate from his policies regarding the freedom of religion and liberty of conscience. The secret service, instead, received the green light to use any mechanism of repression on those who disagreed with the major party line.

The secret service often infiltrated churches and pressured members into cooperation with the state. In this manner, the Bolsheviks attempted to influence and direct church life in their favour (Murygina, 2008, p. 92). In their correspondence with the government, Evangelicals (*Trezvenniki*) complained, 'To drink and get drunk, nobody needs permission from the government. However, to read the Bible and pray, we need all kinds of permissions' (Koloskov, 1924). In a letter of 3 May 1923, written to the Bolshevik government, leaders of the Baptist Union complained about the confiscation of Christian literature by agents of the State Political Administration (GPU) from the Baptist bookstore and publishing house located on Rozhdestvenka Street in Moscow.<sup>32</sup>

Mikhail Timoshenko and Nikolai Levindanto expressed their concern over the issue that some religious books were banned from distribution by the government. They also said that the government inspected the publishing house and prohibited it from publishing any Christian literature. Timoshenko and Levindanto appealed to Article 13 of the Soviet Constitution, which guaranteed freedom of faith and religious beliefs. They emphasized that Baptists had been persecuted under the Romanovs and 'now those persecutions seem to have returned.' Baptists complained that unlawful acts against them were so frequent that it was impossible to inform the Soviet government of every instance (Timoshenko, p. 1).

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<sup>31</sup> In one of the atheistic booklets, Ivan Prokhanov was accused of declaring, "I will not leave until I step over the dead body of the Baptist organization! Baptists call the Evangelical Christian organization a brothel."

<sup>32</sup> Rus. *Gosudarstvennoye politicheskoye upravleniye*.

Toward the end of the 1920s, the Soviet government attempted to introduce the use of 'Scientific Atheism' in its fight against 'religious prejudices' in society. The June 1927 issue of the *Antireligioznik* magazine published an article on the use of 'scientific methodology' in the struggle against religious movements.<sup>33</sup> The heart of this methodology was its attempts to find weak points in the religious beliefs of Evangelicals, countering them with what they defined as logical and materialistic argumentation (June 1927). The 12<sup>th</sup> Congress of the VKP (B)<sup>34</sup> held in 1923, passed a resolution concerning an urgent need to train thousands of atheistic lecturers and propagandists (Krylov, 1960, p. 168).

According to Krylov<sup>35</sup>, who analyses the history of the Bolshevik struggle against religion in the 1920s, the government wanted to 'fight religious elements systematically and intensely. Anti-religious propaganda was designed in such a way as to clearly show to every peasant and worker that religious groups are connected to the class of exploiters' (Krylov, 1960, p. 167).

The real disadvantage that Evangelical churches experienced was that they were being banned from use of the same methods against state ideology since they were considered 'enemies' of the Soviet state. In other words, religious movements in the Soviet Union were not on an equal footing with Soviet atheistic agencies. It is important to point out that the same method of countering religion was used throughout the whole existence of the U.S.S.R. The totalitarian government could not tolerate a competitor within Russia. Philip Boobyer wrote:

Totalitarian movements are mass organisations of atomised, isolated individuals. Compared with all other parties and movements, their most conspicuous external characteristic is the demand for total, unrestricted, unconditional, and unalterable loyalty of the individual member. It is in the very nature of totalitarian regimes to demand unlimited power. Such power can only be secured if literally all men, without a single exception, are reliably dominated in every aspect of their life (Boobyer, 2000, p. 2).

On 28 March, 1923, the secret police conducted searches in the Moscow apartments of Baptist leaders and made several arrests (Krapivin, 2003, p. 88). In 1923, the *Atheist* magazine published an article of the former Orthodox priest Galkin who stated 'Baptists in Russia were doing so well because they were paid by capitalists from abroad' (Galkin, 1923). To counter this publication, the Russian Baptist Union issued a statement of loyalty to the Soviet government based on the state's interest in helping the working class. Baptist leaders

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<sup>33</sup> Major anti-religious works in the 1920s were written by Emil Yaroslavsky, I.I. Skvortsov-Stepanov, A.V. Lunacharskiy, P.A. Krasikov, N.A. Semashko and Vladimir D. Bonch-Bruyevich. A.V. Lunacharskiy was the leading atheistic propagandist who published papers and articles concerning religion (1923-25).

<sup>34</sup> All-Russian Communist Bolshevik Party, Rus. *Vserossiyskaya Kommunisticheskaya partiya (bol'shevikov)*.

<sup>35</sup> N.A. Krylov (1960) offers an extensive analysis of methods used by the Bolshevik Party in its struggle with religion.

promised to take disciplinary actions against any members who might participate in anti-Soviet propaganda (Krapivin, 2003, p. 88).

Evidently, some Bolsheviks were interested in fomenting class hatred and according to Fyodor Oleshchuk, Evangelical Christians were characterised as sectarians. Prokhanov was slanderously labeled as an 'ex-capitalist, monarchist, supporter of tsar's authority, and a major property owner.' Likewise, the Baptist leader, Nikolai Vasil'evich Odintsov, was an 'ex-capitalist and monarchist.' Pavlov, Ivanov-Klyshnikov and Datzko were ex-Mensheviks and ex-socialist revolutionaries (Oleshchuk, 1929).

In November-December 1924, the Anti-religious Committee of the Bolshevik Party presented its vision for future work with Russian Evangelicals. The Bolshevik leadership approved the resolution on 15 December 1924. In addition, the Bolshevik government created a special commission headed by Evgeny Tuchkov, Piotr Smidovich and Piotr Krasikov for splintering the Evangelical movement from the inside (Krapivin, 2003, p. 102).

On 22 August, 1927, the leadership of the Party issued a secret memo number 260, which urged against offering any privileges to the Evangelical movement and recommended allowing its members to perform their activities only insofar as they served the purposes of the government (Krapivin, 2003, p. 111). During the 17 May, 1928 meeting, the government decreed that Christian congresses and conferences were not to be held more often than once every three years.

Local authorities began to charge extremely high rent payments from Evangelical churches. They demanded that Evangelicals make expensive repairs to the buildings in which they held services. Evangelicals were required to obtain permits in order to hold worship services. By the end of the 1920s, state persecution took a systematic form in an attempt to break the backbone of the Evangelical movement (Coleman, 2005, p. 179).

The government also ordered a 50 percent reduction in the publication of Christian literature and sought to limit Christian influence upon youth (Krapivin, 2003, p. 111). In some areas of Russia, local authorities demanded written documents from Evangelicals stating that they would voluntarily liquidate their youth groups within a two-week period, pay taxes, and meet all the requirements of the Soviet legal system. The authorities threatened to close churches that failed to present such written documents<sup>36</sup> (Krapivin, 2003, p. 112).

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<sup>36</sup> In one of the letters written by Evangelical Christians (who called themselves the Sober Christian Church (Rus. *Trezvenniki*)) to the Soviet government in 1924, their leader Koloskov (1924) complains about absence of religious freedom in Soviet Russia. He even goes so far as to state that the conditions for believers are worse than during imperial rule. Koloskov writes that now both Evangelicals and the Orthodox are persecuted in the same manner and that secret service agents are infiltrating churches in order to destroy them from within.

Documents from the archives of the Committee of the State Security of the U.S.S.R. reveal that Evangelicals protested against the government's religious discrimination. Koloskov, in his May 1924 letter to the Bolshevik government argued that all laws and decrees concerning freedom of religion issued by the Soviet Republic existed only on paper. They had no practical application in real life. Koloskov urged the government to announce to the whole world that it persecuted believers in Soviet Russia because 'this is the only honest thing to do' (Koloskov, 1924).

In the mid-1920s, Bolsheviks began to attack Christian cooperatives. In 1925, Fyodor Putintsev, Director of the Sectarian Department of the Union of Militant Atheists, criticized Evangelical cooperatives in the countryside in *Bezbozhnik* magazine. He accused Evangelicals of causing divisions in society and claimed that Christians started cooperatives, not out of a revolutionary spirit, but with significant material gains in sight (Krapivin, 2003, p. 101).

In 1928, the Soviet government took steps to undermine *Utrennyaya zvezda* (Morning Star) Christian commune by admitting into it eight families without prior approval of members of the commune. Because the new members were complete strangers and did not adhere to accepted principles, they caused discord and the commune fell apart (Savinsky, 2001, p. 26). During the same year, the government forced Christian owners of bakeries, restaurants, and other similar small businesses to relinquish their property rights in what amounted to state expropriation (Ivanov, p. 1).

Mounting pressure upon Evangelicals from the State Security Commission (Nezhny, 1993, p. 108) forced them to abandon their stance against compulsory military service (Kolomiytsev, 2012). Initially embedded by the Bolsheviks was the right of believers to refuse to perform military service on religious motivation, which was over time revised by them. In the early 1920s many believers took advantage of this right. However, any attempt to consolidate the refusal to serve in the army at the level of individual unions or evangelical churches became the reason for the pressure from the new state power. So Prohanov, who had been imprisoned for a while, was virtually forced to sign an appeal to believers calling for not avoiding a military service, as historically and dogmatically the evangelicals did not have such a ban. Before this, Prohanov had stated the opposite and tried to make pacifism and anti-militarism take hold, but his statement was met with disapproval among the more conservative, primarily Baptist part of the community. It is likely that these conflicts were intended by the Bolsheviks, who urged Prohanov to make such a statement. Whatever it was, contrary to their previously held position, Evangelical Christians, at their 10<sup>th</sup> Congress in Leningrad in 1926, abandoned pacifism and affirmed 'the importance of service of Evangelical Christians in the military' (Krapivin, 2003, p. 113). In December 1926, under

pressure from the government, Stalingrad Baptist Church approved a motion that members who refused to serve in the Soviet military would be violating Scripture and would face the risk of excommunication from the church (Krapivin, 2003, p. 116).

On 9 May 1927, Piotr Smidovich and Vladimir Chertkov, followers of Tolstoy's philosophy (Rus. *Tolstovtsy*), in correspondence to the state commission in charge of religious affairs, complained that the secret service was pressuring and persecuting not only those who refused to serve in the military but also elderly church members who did not agree with the government on this issue (Krapivin, 2003, p. 116).

By the mid-1920s, the Soviet government equated the Baptist refusal to bear arms with disloyalty to the regime. Bolsheviks tried to use the issue of military service to create a discord among Evangelicals. In 1923, the Anti-religious Committee of the Bolshevik Party passed a resolution advising and pressuring ordinary Evangelical church members to revolt against their denominational leaders. The committee alleged that Evangelical leaders had adopted a hostile stance towards the Soviet government (Krapivin, 2003, p. 88).

Bolsheviks also used the Evangelical attitude toward World War I (1914-1918) (fight against Germans) and the Russian Civil War (1918-1922) against them. Lenin wanted to end the fight against Germany at all costs, whereas Baptists stood for a 'liberating war against German imperialism.' Baptist documents contain a reference to support for 'our brother British Prime Minister Lloyd-George who stands on guard of freedom of the European nation and against the threat of German imperialism' (Pavlov, 1917a). Baptist support of the British prime minister gave grounds to the government to suspect Baptists of being the 'bourgeois sort of Christianity'. In his government-line brochure on 'Class Features of Evangelism', R. Blumenay stated that Evangelicals could not be forgiven for being well off before the Socialist Revolution: Olga Ivanovna Guseva, a merchant's daughter, worked in Novotorzhok as an engineer; ex-manufacturer Fedoseev-Vyazmyatin became a preacher of 'God's word'; Vladikavkaz, authorities accused Ivan Stepanov of being a merchant-*kulak* and of owning several spacious houses. Blumenay writes that at Leningrad Shepetilovsky Streetcar Depot, someone by the name of Frolov was finally unmasked. Prior to the revolution, he had belonged to the imperial guard, however nothing was mentioned to what Church he belonged (Blumenay, 1930, p. 7.)

Blame continued on the Evangelicals for supporting the White Army in the fight against the Bolsheviks in 1918-1922. The 'Sectarian expert,' E. Vostokov, claimed that in the Far East, Baptists fought on the side of the White Army (Vostokov, p. 28). Archival evidence indicates that few Baptists actively supported White forces. In fact, Baptists assisting White armies were the exception. This claim is supported by archival documents. In cases where

cooperation did take place, it was an individual decision of local church leaders. For example, after the White Army occupied Rostov-on-Don, a local pastor wrote to Ivanov-Klyshnikov, 'The order had been restored; the Bolsheviks were driven out of the city and were hiding in the village of Bataysk' (RO MIRA, p. 33).

These occasional cases of the support by evangelicals of the White Army gave a reason for the Bolsheviks to suspect disloyalty to the Soviet government. One of the other areas of concern for the Bolshevik government was the influence of Evangelicals upon young people. In 1925, according to the state's estimate, close to three million people were involved in religious movements in the country. Out of this number, over 150,000 young people belonged to the Evangelical movement (Krapivin, 2003, p. 106). In the mid-1920s, according to some estimates, every Russian Guberniya had at least 10 Evangelical youth groups (Krapivin, 2003, pp. 106–107).

Russian Evangelicals discouraged Christian young people from joining the *Komsomol*, trying to limit the influence of the state's atheistic propaganda upon their youth. In addition, Evangelical leaders discouraged the youth from entering state institutions of higher education (Krapivin, 2003, p. 76). Evangelicals went so far as to compose so-called 'Christian lyrics' for the 'International,' which at the time served as the Soviet anthem:

There is a slogan given to the youth  
For life and holy struggle,  
It is the slogan of power, slogan of God:  
Looking at Jesus go to battle (Oleshchuk, 1929, p. 36)!

The issue regarding young people was raised on 17 May 1921, during the Congress of the Young Communist League of Ukraine (KSMU<sup>37</sup>) by its leader Andrei Rakovskiy. In his speech, he charged *Komsomol* workers to win over *Komsomol* young people under the influence of the Evangelical movement.

*Komsomol* leaders proposed that talk of friendly relations with Evangelicals be discontinued. In addition, members of *Komsomol* were discouraged from comparing religion to communism. They wanted to do away with religion and in no way did they envision any kind of unity between the government and believers, especially in youth work (Krapivin, 2003, p. 83). In the spring of 1921, Lev Schpizbeg, a government insider, made a proposal to the Soviet leadership that offered several ways of neutralising the activities of the Evangelical movement. One suggestion was to introduce measures to decentralize the movement so that churches would be left on their own.

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<sup>37</sup> Rus. *Kommunisticheskiy soyuz molodezhi Ukrainy*.



In October 1922, *Komsomol* leaders urged local activists to cooperate with the government in anti-religious work among youth. Attendance at Evangelical youth groups was prohibited to those under the age of 18. Local governing bodies were to create all kinds of obstacles for the Evangelical young people. Much pressure was placed upon the young people to join the army. *Komsomol* organized various propaganda teams, which travelled to different parts of Soviet Russia to hold seminars and debates on anti-religious issues (Krapivin, 2003, p. 82).

Hosking presents a valid argument when he stated that Evangelicals had something to offer to Russian young people:

Baptists could appeal to young people brought up in the new system, but disillusioned by the failure of party folk to live up to their own principles. Above all, Baptists were a literate church: they laid greater emphasis on Bible reading, as the Orthodox Church had never really done. This made their faith especially attractive to the new literate working class (Hosking, 1992, p. 238).

By the end of the 1920s, the Soviet authorities had collected a range of problems of which they accused the representatives of the evangelical movement. Especially noteworthy are the works of the propagandist, F. Putintsev. (Putintsev, 1928; Putintsev, 1931a; Putintsev, 1931b, Putintsev, 1935). In his works 'sectarians' were systemically exposed as 'enemies,' who must be fought, mainly by atheistic propaganda, but also by other methods. Thanks to Putintsev we have the most comprehensive list of claims of Soviet power to evangelical Christians. First of all, they were accused of not conducting an open and systematic condemnation of 'capitalism' and capitalist states, and not singing praises to the Soviet state, as 'the most progressive state in the world.' Outrage was caused by, for example, the arguments in Christian magazines of the time, which stated that the traditionally Protestant capitalist countries of the Netherlands and Denmark, 'impress with their creation of living environment, order, and purity of life.' With that, the achievements of the Soviet government were praised poorly in these magazines, but mostly they stayed quiet about them (Putintsev, 1935, pp. 172-173). Of course, the reason for that kind of logic was the desire of preachers to show the beneficial effects of Christianity on a country's economy, and not the progressiveness of the capitalist way of life. However, Soviet propagandists interpreted it as a sign of blatant disloyalty and unfriendliness to the Soviet authorities.

Evangelicals were also accused of opposing the revolutionary changes that involved violence, the nationalization of the means of production, i.e. they were for the preservation of small private property. Such views were interpreted by propagandists as 'politically shortsighted' and 'harmful' for the construction of Socialism. The participation of evangelicals in communities and artisan cooperatives was not, in the eyes of the state, a justifying factor

because it was seen as their desire to 'adapt' to the new conditions, while maintaining their own Christian practice and way of life. Basically, evangelicals were criticized because they united into collective farms just for the sake of charity and mutual aid, and not to build a new society. With that, these forms of cooperation which were chosen by believers were recognized as unacceptable by some in the government, as they allegedly kept the idea of private property (Morozov, 1931a). Furthermore, it appeared that the idea of collectivism and the desire to create communes appeared with 'sectarians' before the revolution. Putintsev wrote: 'It turns out that if all the peasants had joined the Baptist sect, they could have lived well even with the tsars ...' (Putintsev, 1935 p. 178). The Soviet authorities could not forgive Baptists for that.

A serious disagreement, which caused acute attacks from the propagandists, was the Christian preaching of peace and non-violence. It was interpreted as a 'bourgeois relic,' 'manipulation in the interests of the exploiters,' or an excuse for the slavery of oppressed classes. Special indignation was caused by this kind of reasoning: 'poverty, deprivation and earthly sorrows are much more favourable conditions for our spiritual growth than joy, bliss and happiness ... sadness is more useful than joy... sufferings nurture the soul ... .' These reflections cited by Putintsev had been published in a desktop calendar called '*Evangel'skiy sbornik*' (The Gospel Collection) in 1928 (Putintsev, 1935, p. 59). Given the fact that the pursuit of happiness on the earth through economic growth and society improvements was the programme of the Soviet government, any appeals that did not support this programme could be construed as disloyalty to the government and 'counter-revolutionary.'

In addition, dissatisfaction was caused by the traditional Christian theological explanation of human misery by the natural sinfulness of people. The logic of charges is exhaustively outlined by Putintsev:

'Sin' prevents people from happiness. Once 'sin' has been defeated, people will be happy. Overcoming his 'sins' (class hatred for the enemy) is possible ... even for an unbeliever, so the happiness of people is possible in any conditions. So, it is not necessary to build socialism to achieve a happy life, because a happy life should be based not necessarily on the material well-being, but most likely only on the spiritual revival of people which for the capitalists, by the way, is far cheaper than the payment of salaries to workers ... (Putintsev, 1935, p. 192).

Believers looked like natural enemies of the socialist revolution and social justice because they called for peace and did not see the root of social injustice like the Bolsheviks.

All the troubles and all the misery, all the bad and harmful have been always explained and are explained by preachers as lack of faith - it is for them the easiest way to hide the true source of existence in a capitalist society of class contradictions, poverty, rightlessness, unemployment, and exploitation. Many of them do not realise the true roots of social evil, so their preaching is more sincere and persistent (Putintsev, 1935, p. 194).

Special exacerbation was caused by believers' criticism of the communists and other people who had declared their commitment to atheism. This criticism was found in sermons, and spiritual and edifying publications. It was conditioned by the desire to show malignancy of life without God, which was natural for believers, but it was the very reason why it became totally unacceptable to the Soviet authorities:

From month to month, from year to year, sectarian preachers have been picking out facts of minor and major problems in various sectors of our economy, rejoiced with difficulties encountered in its path by socialist construction, spread slanderous rumours and gossip about the party and Soviet workers, portrayed workers as a mass of parasites and loafers, and they did all this in order to prove the impossibility of building socialism in our country ... On the assurances of sectarians, the earth is enchained by grief like by a steel ring, which 'is a natural consequence of not believing in god, rejecting eternal life' (Putintsev, 1935, p. 200).

Manifestations of disloyalty were seen not only in the spiritual and edifying sermons of evangelical believers, but also in their relation to their communities and the economic commune as autonomous units entitled to equal relations with the state. The desire to lead an autonomous economic life, avoiding state intervention, including selling the products grown in the communes at competitive prices for themselves, the avoidance of the food allotment and the transfer of surplus products to the State without compensation were all interpreted as 'private-sectarian instincts' worthy of reprehension and suppression.

The Soviet authorities became aware of the potential of the Christian church, its ability to mobilise the people, to educate them, and to disseminate ideas. They soon began to perceive it as a competitor in the struggle for people's minds. This was also exacerbated by the fact that the authorities initially possessed much greater resources and imagined the communist society as a society without pluralism and opposition. Gradually, having consolidated their power in the country, they went to war against the Church and against the society as a whole, plunging them into the abyss of mass repression.

By the end of the 1920s, Russian Evangelical leaders began to realize the complete impossibility of Christianity's coexistence with the Bolshevik government, which promoted atheism as the state ideology (Krapivin, 2003, p. 119). Evangelicals with their theocentric worldview simply could not get along with the godless ideology promoted by the Bolsheviks. The Evangelical Christian leader, Ivan Prokhanov, believed that only God can change human hearts and that it was impossible to do by any human efforts (Bachinin, 2000).

Once the Bolsheviks secured their grip on power in Russia, the time of freedom for Evangelicals that followed the Socialist Revolution of 1917 had ended. What followed was a period of harsh persecution of Christians that was comparable to the one endured by the early church.

The Soviet State was able to prevent Prokhanov from playing a significant role in leading Russian Evangelical Christians after 1928.<sup>38</sup> Pressure upon Baptists continued regarding the state's requirements on compulsory military service, thus compromising one of their cherished principles (Semchenko, 2012, p. 25). Security service agents infiltrated churches and attempted to destroy them from within.

By the end of 1927 and the beginning of 1928, it was evident that any alternatives to Soviet atheistic ideology virtually ceased to exist. Subdued with thousands of its clergy imprisoned and executed, the Orthodox Church no longer enjoyed a privileged position it had had in tsarist Russia. By the end of the 1920s, the state relinquished attempts to conduct ideological education only. Atheistic lectures gave way to repressive measures of the *VCHK* (Shamgunov, 2009, p. 10). Evangelicals began to be viewed as the last elements of anti-revolution and anti-government forces in Soviet Russia (Krapivin, 2003, p. 116).

Evangelicals opposed the Marxist theory of social transformation. They countered it with the concept of Spiritual Revolution that would win the whole country for Christ. Evangelicals claimed that political revolution could have no positive effect without a revolution of the spirit and a reformation of human souls and the innermost consciousness.

Even though the Evangelicals initially cooperated with the Socialist government in building a new society, a considerable ideological gap existed between them and the Bolsheviks. Peaceful coexistence between the Evangelical movement and the Soviet government for the sake of common good did not work out because Bolsheviks saw Evangelical faith as a competitor for the hearts and minds of the population. Therefore, the Soviet government set a course to destroy religious life in the Soviet Union. Beginning with legal and ideological methods of struggle, the government continued to use force by its security police against Evangelicals until it made sure that they no longer had any substantial impact upon the life of society. According to Insur Shamgunov, in the 1930s more than 22,000 Evangelicals were sent to Siberian prison camps. Thousands did not make it home (Shamgunov, 2009, p. 17).

Persecutions of Evangelicals continued well into 1930s. The years 1937-38 saw the most severe persecutions of Russian Christians. The oppression of the church was more or less relaxed with the beginning of the World War II. Centralized activities of the ARECU and the Russian Baptist Union were frozen as in 1928, and Prokhanov (1869-1935) preferred not to return to Russia from his trip abroad and most of the leadership (among them, Yakov Zhidkov and Alexander Karev) were sent to prison camps. In 1944, as Stalin's government

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<sup>38</sup> In 1928, Ivan S. Prokhanov did not return to Russia from one of his trips abroad because of existing persecutions. He died in Berlin, Germany in 1935.

relaxed its persecution of the Orthodox and Evangelicals under the strict governmental supervision, Evangelicals were allowed to establish the Union of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (AUCECB). Oppressed and on the brink of annihilation, Evangelicals had to turn from dreams of spiritually transforming Russia to survival mode.

Evangelical initiatives were tolerated by the Bolshevik government for some time because (1) the advocacy of Vladimir Bonch-Bruyevich, Lenin's secretary, (2) seeming outward similarities between communist and Evangelical ideologies in promotion of the communal way of life and (3) Bolsheviks' desire to crush the Russian Orthodox Church. Once the Bolsheviks secured their grip on power in Russia, they began to exhibit zero tolerance toward Evangelicals. The 1920s became the period of the development of church structure of the evangelical movement which will be discussed separately.

### **3.8 Structure and Development of Evangelical movement**

The preceding material has shown that the years 1917–1920 witnessed a tremendous growth of Evangelical activity in religious and social areas of life in society (1918c, p. 2). New churches were planted and ministries started (1972, p. 9). Many parts of Russia witnessed the formation of new congregations because people were receptive to the preaching of the Gospel (1918f, p. 4) (Murygina, 2008, p. 93).

#### **3.8.1 The Issue of the Unification of Baptists and Evangelical Christians**

One of the important aspects in the life of Evangelical Christians and Baptists was the issue of uniting them into a single union. In May 1920, one of the most significant Congresses of the representatives of the two movements took place, where they discussed the conditions of their unification (Plett, 2011, pp. 96-100). Among the most discussed conditions were issues about the name of the combined Union, its management, the location of its headquarters, as well as the issues of coordination of the organization of local churches since there had been cases where believers who were excommunicated from one church were taken by another. On all these issues there had been collective compromises. However, in practice, the unification of unions was not achieved. Circumstances were such that the differences started to grow soon after the Congress. Prokhanov, who was among the initiators of the Congress, was forced to stop dealing with this issue and switch to other issues (Plett, 2011, pp. 99-100).

The unification had always had symbolic meaning. At that time it would mean an increased centralization that was not necessary in the framework of such a large country as the

Soviet Union. Furthermore, by the mid-1920s, Baptists had found the need to decentralize their own union. For example, protocols and materials of the 26th Congress of Baptists of the U.S.S.R., held in December 1926, stated: ‘Our proliferated Brotherhood can no longer be controlled by the old way of centralisation, i.e. the concentration of control of all things in one place. Life itself in recent years has put forward the formation of local unions that met the spiritual needs of the Brotherhood within their territory. So the Unions and Departments were formed: Far East, East Siberian, Ukrainian, North Caucasus, Transcaucasia and others’ (1927d, p. 2). It is this Congress that adopted the new name of the Union - Federated Union of Baptists of the U.S.S.R. According to the Union Charter, it included eight ‘local Baptist Unions’: the Far East, Siberia, Middle Asia, North-Caucasian, Transcaucasian, All-Ukrainian with the German section, Crimean, Baptist Union of Northern Russia with the Latvian section entering it (1927d, p. 99). Each of the unions was autonomous.

### **3.8.2 Christian Education and Enlightenment**

Many factors influenced the sustainable development of churches. One of the leaders of the Baptist Union in the mid-1920s said:

There is need for the spiritual education of the members and hence there is need for more experienced workers and spiritual teachers. There is a shortage of ordained presbyters, especially in newly formed congregations, and for the proper organisation of congregations on the model given in the Word of God (Steeves, 1976, p. 204).

This situation was aggravated by the fact that there was no practical ability to establish and maintain religious schools, since there were never enough financial resources. Baptist World Alliance was willing to provide financial assistance for the organization of a theological school but it had two conditions: 1) the Bible school had a legal registration and functioned in full accordance with the Soviet law, and 2) the funds provided for the process of staff training were divided equally between Baptists and evangelicals. However, the creation of such a joint school on an equal footing for Baptists and evangelicals failed to happen. Prokhanov, who was Vice-President of the Baptist World Alliance, managed to get the funds in his hand and did everything possible so that evangelical Christians could take precedence in the control over the work of the school. It opened in Leningrad in April 1924. At first Baptist students were also enrolled, but later, in disagreement with the policy of Prokhanov, they left the school. Two years later, the Baptist Union was able to achieve the opening of its own theological courses (Krapivin, 2003, pp. 255-266). The Baptists also planned to open a separate Bible school in Ukraine, but this was not possible to achieve. Sources also report the existence of Regents courses in local communities, which were not regular.

Because of the politics of the Soviet authority in relation to religion and the church at the onset of 1928-1929, educational institutions of Evangelical Christians and Baptists could not continue their work and were closed.

The 1920s were a period for the evangelical movement to establish close ties overseas, with the purpose to improve the evangelistic activities in the U.S.S.R. and to receive assistance with the development and education of churches. Connections with the evangelicals from abroad were for Protestants in the Soviet Union a way to feel part of the global evangelical movement. At that time, there was no Iron Curtain, or the inherent attributes of the Cold War, and Russian evangelicals, especially church leaders, could freely visit communities in the U.S. and Western Europe. Prokhanov frequently took advantage of this opportunity. The materials of the 10th Congress of Evangelical Christians reported that Prokhanov gave an account to the delegates of the Congress for his rather long trips. In particular, they said:

The report of Ivan S. Prokhanov about his overseas trips and activities abroad lasted at least 3 hours, after which the following decision was made: After having heard the report of brother I.S. Prokhanov... about his three trips abroad: the first, to Czechoslovakia and Germany from January to May 1924, the second, to Germany from September to November 1924, and the third, to America from 28 February 1925 to 25 November 1926, the Congress noted their great importance, as the main purpose of the travelling was like the travelling of the sons of Jacob to Egypt in the days of physical hunger ... and was to deliver spiritual bread for the people of God in the U.S.S.R., namely: Bibles, New Testaments, collections of spiritual songs and general spiritual literature. The following objectives were carried out by these trips: (1) It was imported, under the authority of the Soviet government, about 50,000 copies of Bibles, New Testaments, and spiritual songs collections of Kassel editions. (2) A new edition of 'Spiritual songs' has been published in Lodz, consisting of 10 collections, and some of them have been imported. (3) The spiritual and practical connection has been established with the first evangelical Christians in Europe: Khelchitskiy brothers, offspring of the movement of Jan Hus, who even though belong to the Baptist World Alliance, have a different name and had adopted baptism by faith 150 years earlier than Baptists did (1608 in the Netherlands)...

Further, the materials of the Congress reported that a connection with many American communities was established and monetary assistance collected resulting in the printing of 25,000 Bibles with another 20,000 New Testaments to be printed. The Congress noted with appreciation that the Union of Evangelical Christians was essentially turning into a World movement, and it also approved the establishment of the American Board of representatives of the Union in Chicago (Ivan S. Prokhanov, 1927, pp. 15-17).

Systematic attempts were being made to improve the work in the field of spiritual enlightenment. In particular, since 1924, a magazine of Evangelical Christians *Khristianin* (Christian) had been regularly published. In 1926, they also issued a tear-off table calendar, and *Novye napevy* (New Tunes) hymnal. During 1927 and the first five months of 1928, the Union of Evangelical Christians published 35,000 Bibles, 25,000 New Testaments, 25,000 hymnals *Evangel'skiye pesni* (Gospel songs), 25,000 hymnals *Dukhovnye pesni* (Spiritual

Songs), and 10,000 of songs with notes, 15,000 concordances, and 40,000 desktop calendars. Since 1 January 1925, after seven years of absence, the *Baptist* magazine resumed publication. Besides the magazine, the Baptists published a brochure *Ispovedaniye very khristian baptistov* (The Confession of Faith of Baptist Christians) and also *Materials of XXVI Congress of Baptists*. In Ukraine, in 1926, the *Baptist Ukrainy* (Ukrainian Baptist) magazine began to be published (Plett, 2011, p. 162).

But, in general, only few had a theological education, and even the general level of education of ministers was extremely low. Out of 239 participants at 26 Baptist Congress (1928), only 38 had a secondary, specialized secondary or higher education, leaving the rest to have their level of education indicated as 'low'. It should also be noted that the vast majority of those ministers were peasants (1927d, p. 4).

### **3.8.3 Women in Church**

But even with lower education, there were not enough workers in God's field. As a result, the participation of women in ministry was considered, although this service was almost never related to leadership positions that were completely dominated by men. In the 1920s, women played an active role in the Russian Evangelical movement. Before this period, activities by groups of Evangelical women were virtually non-existent. Reports from various locations in Russia conclude that activities of Christian women were on the increase. They organized special worship services and Bible study groups in larger cities. Women raised significant amounts of funding for charity causes in their areas as well as directly participating in charities assisting believers and unbelievers. In 1926, Evangelical Christian women from Kiev, Ukraine, organised a soup kitchen for people in need. Archival documents indicate that they were in the process of raising funds for the purchase of a larger stove (Coleman, 2005), p. 171). Members of the same group established a sewing workshop and did laundry for prisoners and homeless people in the area (Coleman, 2005, p. 171). Evangelical women preached during worship services organized especially for women, which were rare. According to a member of the Jewish Baptist congregation, 'All brethren have the idea that women should not preach. From attending some of the women's worship services I can say that some of the sermons were deeper and more interesting than those of men' (Coleman, 2005, p. 172).

In 1925, the *Baptist* published a short article entitled 'A Few Words about Our Sisters', which discussed the importance of women's ministries in Baptist churches. The article encouraged every Baptist woman to find a certain ministry in the church. It encouraged women to serve as a source of blessing and encouragement for local congregations and for



men in particular. The article specified three major avenues for women's ministries in Baptist churches: (1) prayer and support of the church, (2) mission and evangelism and (3) visitation of the sick, distribution of printed literature and collection of donations (1925c).

The rise in activities of Evangelical women was attributed to the proclamation by Bolsheviks of the equality of men and women. Because of this proclamation, Evangelicals were prompted to re-evaluate the roles of women in churches, granting them more freedom of action, where before some churches did not even allow women to speak publically or pray during worship services.

An article in one of the 1922 Evangelical newspapers called for the restriction of women's participation in church life. Prokhanov challenged this approach. He indicated that the true liberation of a woman in Russian society would come only with spiritual transformation. He further stated that Evangelical women were to be charged with responsibilities of doing charitable work, being involved in missionary activities and raising the younger generation in the spirit of Christ.

Unlike Evangelical Christians, Baptist churches had stricter rules and regulations concerning women's dress code. Baptist publications indicate a debate in churches over the issue of head covering. Even though the subject was dropped altogether later, it is evident that the question of woman's leadership in Baptist churches was a big issue in many congregations.

At the beginning of the 1920s, the Soviet government exhibited openness toward women's roles in society. The authorities had not yet launched a mass persecution of Evangelicals. They were supportive of Christian harvest festivals and economic initiatives, such as communes and cooperatives. Russian Evangelicals responded to such openness with enthusiasm, seeing things from a different angle, which did not quite go along with the views of the government. In spite of this, the 1920s saw an attempt in coexistence between a Christian idea of Socialism and Soviet power.

It should be noted that evangelicals raised the question about the opening of biblical courses for women. We know about Baptists that they allowed women to go only to regents courses (Plett, 2011, p. 162). Overall, Baptists recognised the important role of women in ministry. The resolution of the fifth Congress of Ukrainian Baptists (held in Kharkov in 1928) stated: 'The Congress also welcomes the work of sisters, it only regrets that the work is carried out only in very few communities yet; and it expresses the wish that in all of our communities the opportunity to express themselves in the service of the Lord be given to sisters' (1928, p. 6).

### 3.8.4 Children and the Young People

In the 1920s, Evangelical Christians gave particular attention to the question of raising children and youth education. Russian Evangelicals welcomed the January 1918 decree of the Soviet government regarding the separation of the church and the school. In this decree, the Evangelicals saw a liberating tool, which gave them freedom to educate their children in Evangelical beliefs. It has to be said that prior to the Socialist Revolution, children of Evangelicals (like all other children) had to undergo instruction in the Orthodox traditions, which included revering icons and kissing the cross. Because they were surrounded by Russian Orthodox culture, Evangelicals particularly resented these two practices, emphasizing that God cannot and should not be depicted in iconic art (Savinsky, 2001, p. 44).

Evangelicals enthusiastically supported the law regulating Soviet public schools.<sup>39</sup> They were in favour of the state control of the schools, especially because the Orthodox Church was in charge of religious education in schools prior to 1917. Yet, Russian Evangelicals were against the article that prohibited religious education of children under 18 years of age (Krapivin, 2003, p. 47). The Soviet government, whose official policy was to promote atheism, used this article to disband all Sunday schools, including those in Evangelical churches. On 21 January 1921, the government decreed that children under the age of 18 could be taught religion only in homes by their parents or by other instructors (with parental consent). Children were not to be taught in large groups (there was a limit of three children per group), no matter whether they were members of the same family or not (Savinsky, 2001, p. 44).

Following the governmental decree, Evangelical leaders advised families to teach children at home. Where impossible, they encouraged Christians to teach children in small groups. Evangelicals emphasized the importance of family time and the reading of the Scriptures and prayer in the family circle (1925b). In some locations, in spite of the decree, Evangelical churches continued to hold Sunday schools and Vacation Bible schools. They even applied for permission to start religious schools (Krapivin, 2003, p. 47). According to Evangelical statistics of the time, the youth comprised between 20 and 30 percent of the entire church membership (Krapivin, 2003, p. 48).

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<sup>39</sup> Unlike the Evangelicals, the Russian Orthodox Church did not welcome the decree, which served the purpose of destruction of its influence upon the society and the State. In particular, *Pomestnyi Sobor* (Assembly of the Orthodox Clergy and Laity) that took place in Moscow in 1917 issued a statement, in which the decree was called the instrument of 'satanic persecution' of the church. The Orthodox Church threatened everybody that would cooperate with the Soviet authorities in implementation of the decree with excommunication. The Bolsheviks encountered mass protests of the Orthodox believers all over the country. They considered protests to be organised confrontations of reactionary forces and suppressed them with mass repressions of the Orthodox clergy.

Children of Russian Evangelicals took an active part in worship services by reciting Christian poetry and singing songs. They participated in the celebration of Christian as well as Soviet State holidays. Evangelicals tried to use all means available to point the children and youth<sup>40</sup> toward spiritual matters.<sup>41</sup>

Youth ministry was well organized. Some youth circles were responsible for the caring of the sick while others were charged with overseeing economic aid to the youth. Some youth groups were responsible for the printing and distribution of Christian literature. The youth work at the time was considered of such importance that young people enjoyed wholehearted support of the leaders of Evangelical congregations (Krapivin, 2003, p. 43).

Evangelical youth was involved in missionary work. Young people travelled to towns and villages with the goal of sharing their beliefs. They organized so-called, 'youth nights' (Rus. *molodyozhnye vechera*) during which they enjoyed food and tea<sup>42</sup>, listened to testimonies and sang Christian hymns. The youth nights attracted young people from the community, some of whom readily embraced Christian beliefs (Coleman, 2005, p. 170).

As time went by, Christian youth nights, organized by Evangelicals, began to present an alternative to methods used by the Soviet government to raise the youth in the spirit of atheism. In one case, a young female Baptist from Leningrad had a discussion with a member of the Young Communist League (Rus. *Komsomol*). The arguments of the Christian young woman were so convincing, that a member of the *Komsomol* followed her to the Baptist worship service (Coleman, 2005, p. 171). This case showed that young Evangelicals were not afraid to challenge the views of atheists in public, which eventually led to discord between the government and Evangelicals<sup>43</sup> (Coleman, 2005, p. 171). In the eyes of the Soviet government, Evangelicals were creating parallel structures of influence and were opposing the state machine in its struggle for ideological control over the hearts and minds of the people. Even though Evangelicals did not challenge the Bolsheviks directly, eventually the peaceful coexistence came to an end (Krapivin, 2003, p. 48).

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<sup>40</sup> Russian Evangelicals used the term 'youth' loosely. They considered all of those less than 30 years of age to be the 'youth'. Churches organized so-called 'Youth gatherings' (Rus. *Molodyozhnye obshcheniya*) and 'Youth circles' (Rus. *Molodyozhnye kruzki*). Some of the *Molodyozhnye obshcheniya* were organized at regional levels.

<sup>41</sup> According to one of the governmental reports, 'Sectarians use the following means for their propaganda: declamation of poetry, choir hymns, orchestras, special music as well as movies. At their congress, Evangelical Christians discussed whether it was permissible to show movies during prayer meetings. The congress agreed that those meeting, at which films were show, attracted more visitors. So, those present agreed that showings of movies were quite acceptable.'

<sup>42</sup> *Vecherya lyubvi* in Russian.

<sup>43</sup> For instance, in 1926, Baptist young people from Leningrad held a gathering around the theme 'Is it true that soon Christianity will disappear?'

### 3.9 Conclusion

Several factors contributed toward numerical growth among Russian Evangelicals. First, evangelistic zeal of Baptists following the Socialist revolution led to a dramatic increase in the number of churches. Second, the Baptist work ethic and mutual assistance in the communes attracted a large number of peasants. Third, new legislation regarding military service led to an influx of people in the churches. But the most important factor was that the state policy of the Bolsheviks during the 1920s was generally loyal to evangelical believers.

The period of freedom in the 1920s was unprecedented in the life of Soviet Evangelicals (Murygina, 2008, p. 93). It can be compared only to the early 1990s. The 1920s saw a tremendous rise in social activity of Evangelicals who thought that they had finally achieved what they longed for – religious freedom and the opportunity to transform society by spiritual means. It also saw a significant rise in activities of the Evangelical youth and women.

Pavel Pavlov sincerely believed in cooperation with the Soviet government and the establishment of a true democratic state in Russia. He hoped that the Soviet government that came to power in 1917 would guarantee true religious freedom to the Russian citizens. Pavlov did not realize that he would be arrested in 1933 and die in a concentration camp in 1936 just for being a Baptist believer and holding to the idea of freedom for all<sup>44</sup> (Popov, 2004).

Russian Evangelicals deeply cared about the spiritual and physical needs of their fellow citizens. Questions of missionary and social work were the main topics discussed at regular congresses and conferences. Evangelicals provided abundant financial support for the cause of evangelism and missionary work (Morozov, 1931b, p. 12).

Evangelicals were eager to cooperate with the Socialist government in building a new society by promoting a Christian model of life in an agricultural setting. They established agricultural communes, cooperatives and Christian settlements, following Prokhanov's dream, in which Christians were to serve as models and examples to the rest of the society (Morozov, 1931b, pp. 12-13). Socialist ideas and the model of communal life resonated well with the Evangelicals during the initial period. Communes and cooperatives were embodiments of the ideal Christian coexistence, which had its roots in the Book of Acts. In spite of disagreements and different understandings of the role of Christian involvement in the life of society among them, they rushed to take advantage of new opportunities of being involved in the social and spiritual transformation of Russia.

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<sup>44</sup> Vladimir Popov (2004) provides a detailed account of Pavel Pavlov's life and struggle for religious freedom in Soviet Russia.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR POST-SOVIET EVANGELICALS IN THE 1990S AND THEIR RESPONSE TO THE NEW CHALLENGES**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Conditions and the most notable trends in the development of the evangelical movement in the former Soviet Union in the 1990s are analysed in this chapter. This period covers literally the first decade after the collapse of the U.S.S.R., i.e. from 1991 to 2000. Obviously, the year 2000 did not bring the end to the post-Soviet era, but its first decade was the most pivotal time of transition that deserves special attention and as such is selected for this study.

Although there was a collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, for most people of the Former Soviet Union its territory continued to be perceived as intact, and they continued to regard themselves as ‘Soviet people.’ Rethinking their ‘Soviet’ identity was an uneven process in different countries of the former U.S.S.R. In post-Soviet countries that form the basis of this study, namely Russia, Ukraine and Moldova, this rethinking of the past identity and search for a new one is not over yet.

In this chapter consideration will be given to how the evangelical movement evolved when repression against it stopped and its opportunities for ministry were largely increased. Three aspects of the life of the evangelical movement will be examined: prospects for development of the movement in the context of new social trends, relations with the state, and the internal structure of churches.

### **4.2 Evangelicals and New Social Tendencies in Post-Soviet Lands**

#### **4.2.1 Crisis of the 1990s and eschatological sentiment of believers**

At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, growing economic and political instability under Gorbachev led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union (Tompson, 2003, p.78; Hosking, 2011, p. 569)<sup>45</sup> and served as a fertile ground for visions of the apocalypse

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<sup>45</sup> Geoffrey Hosking (2011) argues that by the early 1980s the internal crisis in the Soviet Union 'was undermining the country's economic productivity, her moral standing in the world, and her great-power status'.

among Evangelicals. When interviewed on 7 March 2006, Victor Loginov observed that 'shocking waves of radical economic reforms and instability during the Yeltsin era (1991–1999) added little optimism to daily life for Russians in general and believers in particular.' The hopes for economic prosperity that would come alongside freedom and democracy in Russia and other former Soviet republics did not materialize by the mid-1990s (Truscott, 1997, p. 78). The Gross Domestic Product declined by 5-7 percent. Russia's foreign and internal debt grew while central bank gold and foreign currency reserves fell by one-third. The payment of wages and benefits were delayed on a massive scale. Taxes were so high that virtually every economic entity avoided paying them. The 'shadow economy' continued to grow (Medvedev, 2000, pp. 264-265).

Apocalyptic and eschatological moods intensified among Evangelicals in the late 1980s and early 1990s as the whole country endured economic collapse (Billington, 2004, p. 84). Ethnic conflicts and rising nationalistic feelings and tendencies in the Baltic republics, Western Ukraine, the Moldovian Soviet Socialist Republic, Georgian Nagorny Karabakh and the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan prompted Evangelical pastors to emphasize that the *eschaton* (the end of times) was coming soon (Panici, 2003, pp. 1–2).

The growth of nationalism in the Baltic and other republics of the U.S.S.R. in the early 1990s, (Panici, 2003, p. 2) was a result of the long-time policy of 'Russification' carried on by Joseph Stalin (1929–1953) and continued under Leonid Brezhnev (1964–1982) (Tompson, 2003, p. 93), (Truscott, 1997, p. 77).

The rise in the numbers of educated people among various ethnicities of the Soviet Union prompted a greater awareness of their own self-consciousness and national identity (Tompson, 2003, p. 95.) When interviewed on 19 April 2009, Ion Rotaru, pastor in Moldova, remarked, 'For several generations of Soviet citizens (including believers), *nationalism* was a relatively new phenomenon because they had been indoctrinated in the Soviet model of Communism, which promoted internationalism and the idea of the unity of the working classes of all nations.'

For Soviet Evangelical believers the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorny Karabakh represented the fulfilment of the prophetic words of Jesus Christ. The earthquake that took place in Armenia in 1988, confirmed for many Evangelical believers the prophecy of Christ indicated in Matthew 24:7. Food shortages indicated the truthfulness of the prophecy that 'there will be famines' (Matthew 24:6).

Since the state owned and controlled the media, Soviet citizens had little access to objective, unbiased sources of information. The only exceptions were people who lived close to the Western and Far Eastern frontiers of the Soviet Union who had access to *Voice of*

*America* and *Radio Free Europe* broadcasts. Very few Soviet citizens had ever travelled abroad to see what life beyond the 'Iron Curtain' was like. Thus, the magnitude of Soviet political turmoil at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s was assumed to be the case for the whole world.

Chapter two of Revelation was commonly used in Evangelical homilies to warn believers against being complacent in face of the coming *eschaton*:

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm -- neither hot nor cold -- I am about to spit you out of my mouth. (Rev.3:14 – 16, NIV).

The church of the *eschaton* identified itself with the church in Laodicea that was 'neither cold nor hot'. In light of this, Evangelical ministers called for an examination of each individual's walk before God and holy living.

The Evangelical eschatological paradigm provided an escape from responsibility for changes and opportunities that suddenly emerged. Evangelicals in the Soviet Union prayed for freedom for years and longed for divine intervention. When the U.S.S.R. collapsed and Christians could act as agents of transformation, they found themselves bound by their eschatological views. They waited for another direct divine intervention that would somehow change things for the better instead of initiating change themselves. When interviewed on 10 June 2007, George Boltnew supported this assumption by stating:

Much of the preaching in the 1990s had eschatological flavour. It is understandable. When one is persecuted, one preaches about divine deliverance. Thus, many sermons in that period dealt with the theme of the second coming of Christ. Believers were praying, 'Lord, come and deliver us!' They could not imagine that things could change on their own or that they could be agents of change. In the 1990s, I travelled to the former Soviet Union quite frequently and remember that most every service had at least one eschatological sermon.

One can easily see that Evangelical believers were more preoccupied with preparing themselves for the rapture of the Church than with active witness about Christ that could lead to a great social transformation. In an interview on 15 August 2006, Yakov Franchuk, Evangelical Senior Presbyterian for Far East Russia, stated, 'The church has been in the state of waiting for the second coming of Christ. People were trying to spend more time with God. They thought that the present chaos would cause disorder in their families and all kind of disasters.'

For many, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 signalled 'the end of the world'. The U.S.S.R. was the only country that they knew, and their feelings were understandable. Others felt that it was God's punishment inflicted for over seventy years of communist and atheist propaganda, the destruction of church buildings, and oppression.



#### 4.2.2 Challenge of Religious Freedom

After the Soviet Empire disintegrated, Evangelical churches found themselves in a new situation of religious freedom. Natalie Kononenko wrote about the mood in the air in Ukraine in the 1990s:

Ukraine today experiences a spiritual renaissance. Religion was officially banned for the seventy years of Soviet rule. As a result, current interest in organised religion is intense. Everywhere there are cathedrals and monasteries under construction or reconstruction. In Central Ukraine, most villages, even small ones, have opened up places of worship either by building new churches, restoring old ones, or converting existing structures that were not houses of worship into churches (Kononenko, 2006, p. 46).

The 1990s witnessed a great number of former atheists and agnostics interested in Christianity. They came in dozens, confessed their sins, and longed for a new beginning. The numbers of baptisms at Bethel Evangelical Church (Kishinev, Moldova) in the 1990s were remarkable. The year 1990 witnessed the baptism of 175 new members while 208 people were baptized in 1993 and 137 in 1995 respectively compared to 44 persons in 1984. The number of baptiszd people declined from 1996 until the end of the 1990s with only 38 persons baptized in 1999. Church membership peaked in 1995 at 1,557, compared to 715 in 1977 (Turlac, 2008, pp. 172, 197).

When interviewed on 7 March 2006, Victor Loginov observed that, ‘The difference in views, attitudes, and values between the old-timers and the newcomers created a great divide, which many ministers found hard to bridge.’ Such situations caused some splits in local congregations as well as the removal of new church members from participation in any leadership roles. New members of Evangelical churches, especially those with higher education, longed to share their faith with their friends and colleagues. However, very soon they discovered that churches found it hard to accept newcomers who did not easily blend in. Newcomers felt uncomfortable when they noticed suspicious looks and realized how different their style of clothes was from those who frequented the church from their childhood. The inner Evangelical culture resisted any influence from the outside and thus churches remained closed (Sergienko, 2011).

When interviewed on 7 March 2006, the Reverend Loginov and the Reverend Rotaru (interviewed on 19 April 2009) came to a common conclusion that ‘Evangelical churches were largely unprepared for the freedoms of the end of 1980s and beginning of the 1990s.’ Believers were taken by surprise (Raber, 2004, p. 1). Though many welcomed Gorbachev’s reforms, few anticipated the rapid collapse of the Soviet Union. It took several years for the majority of Evangelicals to come to terms with the changes that swept over what was known as the largest country in the world. When interviewed on 10 June 2007, Boltnew indicated:

The 1990s were unbelievable. The problem was that no one had expected that such times would ever come; no one was ready, because nobody believed that the Soviet Union would collapse. It was like an eternal country. That was the perception of the country both there and here, in the West.

In dealing with change, churches encountered an influx of people who became interested in Christianity, had many questions and looked to fill the spiritual vacuum developed during over seventy years of atheistic ideological domination. The newcomers did not adhere to long-accepted church etiquette, did not use religious terminology, and often asked uncomfortable and thought-provoking questions. This led to confusion on the part of long-time churchgoers who could not fathom that long-held traditions could be challenged in any way.

One of the newcomers complained that a member of a local Evangelical congregation attempted to instruct him on how to properly dress when coming to church even before he stepped into the sanctuary for the first time. Goncharov wrote:

Traditionalism that flourishes with a ritual is given a higher regard than an individual human being is. Many people argue over secondary issues, such as the colour of paint on church walls and the number of preachers during worship. Yet, they forget about the most important commandment of Jesus, which is to love your neighbour as yourself and help him/her in his (or her) spiritual growth and with physical needs. Christ healed people on the Sabbath day to show that a man is more precious than a ritual or a tradition (Goncharov, 2008).

Charismatic missionaries and newly established churches had more success in attracting newcomers than post-AUCECB churches. When interviewed on 15 April 2006, the Reverend Yakov Franchuk said, 'When people came to Charismatic churches, they did not have to deal with the importance of the dress code. Churches emphasised the inner state of one's relationship with God. This is why Charismatics have been more successful in their outreach efforts.'

Lacking training in the liberal arts and theology and not having access to Christian literature in their own language, church leaders could not draw upon the vast amount of experience of the Church that dealt with different crises throughout the centuries. They proved to be unable to explain from the biblical perspective some of the historical metamorphoses and social changes that were taking place in post-Soviet society.

While some churches made minor adaptations to their internal culture<sup>46</sup> and their attitudes toward the surrounding society, the majority of congregations and their leaders found it difficult to adapt to new times (Shamgunov, 2009, p. 208). Insur Shamgunov interviewed several Central Asian Evangelical pastors who admitted that they 'simply did not know what to do' when visiting foreign teams left or when their congregations decreased in size due to emigration (Shamgunov, 2009, p. 208).

They continued to operate under old rules while battling with the new reality that dawned upon them. According to Oleg Turlac, the church had to discard its mentality of being the 'club' or 'inner circle' for formerly persecuted Christians. Since the mid-1990s, many people in Russia and other CIS countries have lost interest in Evangelical Christianity because too many churches have not been ready to accept them (Turlac, 2004a).

In his interview on 7 March 2006, Loginov said, 'While eager to grow their congregations in numbers, Evangelical ministers did not realise the extent of transformation that newcomers would bring to their congregations. These included challenges to the dress code, requests for improved sermons, greater professionalism in music and arts, and diversity in music styles.' Many ministers considered what they viewed as the free-thinking of new believers as the most dangerous threat they faced. Newcomers did not feel bound by long-held Evangelical traditions and did not have any experience of suffering for the cause of Christ. For many of them, faith was the reality of the present rather than of the past. According to Vitali Kulikov, interviewed on 4 December 2006, 'On one hand, churches needed change. On the other hand, they were not prepared for coming changes. Many did not take advantage of freedom and remained locked within themselves.'

### **4.3 The Challenge of Westernization**

When interviewed on 15 August 2006, Franchuk said, 'Evangelicals entered the 1990s largely unprepared for the phenomenon of openness, cultural diversity, and Westernisation.' Communism favoured uniformity in thinking and living (Sergienko, 2010c, p. 7). Interest in Western goods and products developed in the Soviet Union since the 1960s–1970s as dissatisfaction with Soviet-style Socialism was on the rise. As Brezhnev's stagnation years were looming on the horizon and the slowing down of growth in the Soviet economy, the

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<sup>46</sup> In his dissertation, Dr Insur Shamgunov (2009) goes on to describe the painful process of change in-depth.

citizens of the country increasingly valued the Western lifestyle and products as superior to those produced in the Soviet Union (Kanevsky, 2007).

With Gorbachev's travels in the West widely televised, with the appearance of a free press, and independent television stations, Christians in the U.S.S.R. were exposed to life in the United States of America and other developed countries of the world (Truscott, 1997, p. 36). The free circulation of tapes and CD recordings, as well as the growing access to the Internet, prompted interest among younger believers in contemporary Western praise and worship music. Songs and choruses, translated from English into Russian and other languages, understandably interested the younger generation of believers (Kanevsky, 2007). Parallel to changes in worship music were the changes in dress code, use of religious language, and order and style of worship.

When interviewed on 31 March 2006, Pavel Zhirov indicated, 'For many Evangelical ministers and long-time churchgoers these changes proved to be a "bitter pill" to swallow.' Changes in worship and music style prompted an ultra-conservative reaction. Evangelical congregations in Central Asia (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) introduced a ban on praise and worship choruses, regarding them as 'unbiblical and foreign', even though much of Russian Evangelical hymnody previously had been derived from English, German, and other languages (Savinsky, 2003). No regard was given to the fact that the lyrics of such praise and worship songs as, *As the Deer* (Rus. *Kak olen' zhazhdet k vodam*) and *If My People* (Rus. *Esli moi narod smiritsya*) had been taken directly from the Old Testament. (2 Chr.7:14; Ps.42:1)

Such a reaction can be related to the long-standing controversy between Slavophiles and Westerners (2011d). Slavophiles and Westerners were intellectuals in mid-19th-century Russia who represented opposing schools of thought concerning the nature of Russian civilization. Slavophiles held that Russian civilization was unique and superior to Western culture because it was based on such institutions as the Eastern Orthodox Church, the village commune, or *mir*, and the ancient popular assembly, the *zemsky sobor*.

Similar concepts were used in the aftermath of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War. Having succumbed to Soviet propaganda and having been embittered by the collapse of the U.S.S.R., Soviet Evangelical leaders directed their frustration toward the West and all things Western, which, regrettably, included ecclesiastical and liturgical matters. When interviewed on 31 March 2006, the Reverend Zhirov stated:

By virtue of our culture and way of thinking, we have a perception of democracy different from the West. We have our own way and our own direction. When foreign preachers come and say that churches should have a democratic style of governance, this creates problems. We do not need this because democracy brings divisions and troubles into churches.

Vladimir Solodovnikov, who left the AUCECB church and joined the Lutherans, is a strong opponent of Western influence upon churches. According to him, Westernization robbed Russian Evangelicals of their culture. It forced them to embrace postmodern relativism and an eclectic pseudo-culture unrelated to Russian tradition. The American dollar and McDonald's style fast-food standardization are at the centre of Western culture (Solodovnikov, 2004).

In the beginning of the 1990s, restrictions on travel outside of the former Soviet Union were lifted. Thus, a greater number of church leaders began to travel abroad to international events and conferences. There they interacted with the worldwide body of their fellow believers and began to notice theological, ecclesiastical, and liturgical differences between them and representatives of other Baptists of the world. When interviewed on 31 March 2006, the Reverend Zhiron said, 'While some welcomed challenges in thinking and introduced some helpful ecclesiastical changes, others resisted them and rejected all things Western.'

When interviewed by William S. Covington, Jr. in the summer of 1993, Marsh Moyle, Director of the Central European Foundation (Bratislava, Slovakia), said the following about 'the great divide' between East and West:

One of the greatest problems we are faced with in ministering in East Central Europe is the 'reality gap'. By this I mean the perception of reality, as it exists in the East. Western missionaries come to the East with a distinctly Western idea of reality. If one wants to place a phone call in the West, one simply picks up the phone and places the call. If one's plumbing is leaky, one simply calls a repairman. But these simple tasks, taken for granted in the West, are different here in the East. Frequently, all phone lines are busy or one simply cannot get through for one reason or another. Leaky plumbing is an ever-present reality in the East, with which one simply learns to live. As a result, one's work effectiveness drops considerably compared to Western standards (Marsh Moyle, 1993).

In many cases, the acceptance or rejection of new ideas was influenced by the educational level and place of ministry (urban or rural context) of pastors. Urban churches in general were more open to change in worship styles and church practices, whereas rural churches remained largely closed.

Most ministers who travelled abroad were impressed with Western mega-churches and the success of their outreach in America. They marvelled at the hundreds of smiling young people who streamed into large and spacious church buildings carrying their Bibles. Regretfully, only a few of them were willing to make the necessary adjustments to the reality of the new times of freedom and do what it would take to reach out to the younger generation whose hearts and minds were wide open after the collapse of the Soviet regime.

Reverend Yakov Franchuk, interviewed on 15 August 2006, stated that young people who joined his church asked him to purchase musical equipment so that a praise team would be able to lead worship. He resented their demands by saying that his generation did not have musical instruments, and yet they sang and were involved in church ministry. Franchuk said,

‘We had very little before the times of freedom came. The brothers did not think of having good conditions. They prayed in simplicity, read the Word, and preached. They probably could not sing beautifully, but those times of fellowship blessed many people.’

The totalitarian mentality of Evangelical ministers that paralleled the Soviet system of governance also hindered change. Reverend Franchuk, interviewed on 15 August 2006, indicated that years spent under the communist yoke taught pastors to rule over their flocks the way Communist Party bosses did:

The structure was similar to the one the Communists had. If the governor of a certain district made a statement, everyone listened and rushed to implement his orders. The same situation existed in the church. Pastors had unquestionable authority and demanded obedience, even at the expense of sacrificing Scriptural truth. I think that this old-time structure still has influence upon our churches. In reality, a minister should be a servant and not a master. However, we, the Slavs, always, respected rulers with an 'iron fist'.

When interviewed on 17 February 2011, Peter Beddow, a Baptist churchman from Great Britain, shared that while present at the European Baptist Congress in Lillehammer, Norway, in 1994, he witnessed 'the great divide' between the Baptist believers from Eastern and Western Europe. Beddow stated that, ‘one could cut a clean line between those seated in the assembly hall that came from Russia and other Eastern bloc countries, and Baptists from the West.’ The former President of the RUECB, Piotr Konovalchik, expressed his utter frustrations to the leaders of the EBF for, as he thought, the 'Charismatic' worship style was inappropriate during sessions of the EBF Congress of 1994 (Kozynko, 1994). When interviewed on 20 March 2006, Chernovtsy, Ukrainian pastor Piotr Zeona indicated, ‘Any deviation from tradition and well-tested church practices was viewed as sin.’

Evangelical leaders were eager to receive Western financial aid and literature, but they resisted acceptance of Western theological traditions and liturgical practices. According to Bethel University (St. Paul, Minnesota, U.S.A.) Professor, Naomi L. Smith, whereas Western Christians placed greater emphases upon salvation by grace through faith, Evangelicals in Ukraine stressed the connection between one's faith and works as well as the aspect of holy living (Smith, 2008). A limited number of churches accepted cooperation and partnerships with Western church organizations such as Nazarene, Methodist, Presbyterian churches and a number of independent Evangelical congregations. Charismatic churches began to flourish in the Ukraine, culminating with the formation of 25,000-member Kyiv congregation led by Sunday Adelaja (Long, 2008).

For some Evangelicals, challenges to the existing worship practices and the church dress code were radical enough that they opted to emigrate to the West rather than accept changes in their own culture. However, the hope that they could preserve traditions better in the West was very quickly proven not to be true.

The 1990s opened the door of opportunity for Gospel outreach to the population of the former U.S.S.R. through mass media, namely television, radio, newspapers and magazines. However, Evangelicals made only limited use of mass media (Davey, 2000), through an inherited mistrust, possibly as the media through the years portrayed Evangelicals as 'backwards-thinking sectarians' (Tolwinski, 2000). It was the West that primarily initiated the use of printed media and television because it had experience of Christian radio broadcasts into the Soviet Union and regarded hi-tech media as an effective tool for outreach. It had the necessary experience and funding for large-scale projects.

Jimmy Swaggart, Billy Graham, and Robert Schuller were among the pioneers to use mass media for purposes of Christian outreach in the Soviet Union. The *Jimmy Swaggart Telecast* appeared on Channel 1 of Soviet television as early as 1988 and continued into the 1990s (Swaggart, 2011). It usually ran early on Saturday mornings. Schuller broadcast his *Hour of Power* (Rus. *Chas sily dukha*) on Russian television from the beginning of the 1990s on Sunday mornings (2011b). It became widely popular among people from 'all walks of life' because Schuller (unlike Swaggart) did not engage in any denominational controversies and always had a positive message to share.

Among other efforts, Evangelicals remember the showing of the *Superbook* series on Leningrad television in 1989, which was immensely popular with children (Jacob, 2006). In the 1990s, it was translated into Estonian, Armenian, Romanian, Karelian and several other languages (William J. Brown, 1997, p. 2).

In 1993, Billy Graham's crusade in Essen, Germany, was broadcast into Russia and other former Soviet republics via satellite. The broadcast of the preaching of the Gospel via modern technology generated mixed feelings among Evangelicals. Many felt that the use of modern technology was inappropriate for communicating the teachings of Christ.

Moldovian Evangelicals developed a 30-minute broadcast on Sunday afternoons that highlighted the life of local churches and invited people to come. Yet, that effort was short-lived. The *Little Samaritan* Christian radio programmes aired in the 1990s. They featured Romanian, American and local Moldovian preachers who communicated in Russian and Romanian languages. The *Little Samaritan* programmes continue to run until present time. The *Little Samaritan Mission* run by Romanian emigrants in the United States of America supports the radio station financially (2011d).

When interviewed on 15 August 2006, Reverend Yakov Franchuk noted that 'the newspaper *Khristianskoye primorye*, reached believers in the Far East of Russia starting in the 1990s. However, this local effort was not long lasting. The publication ceased to exist once its editor left the region.'

In Russia, the Evangelical dissident, Alexander Semchenko,<sup>47</sup> started the *Protestant* newspaper, which aimed to serve as a means of spreading information and as a source of inspiration for the Evangelicals in the former U.S.S.R. (2011c). His efforts remained without support of the RUECB, the successor of AUCECB.

One can name several reasons why Evangelicals were not active in employing television, radio and printed press. First, prior to the 1990s, churches were marginalized. They hesitated to have any close contact with those in power. When interviewed on 19 April 2009, Reverend Ion Rotaru stated, ‘Since newspapers and other sources of media in the Soviet Union often portrayed Evangelicals as sectarians and spread negative information about them, churches were not inclined to cooperate with much less start their own media projects.’

Second, when interviewed on 31 March 2006, Reverend Zhiron said, ‘Christians in the U.S.S.R. were virtually excluded from the life of society and, thus, did not have any experience of starting and running mass media projects. They enjoyed radio broadcasts that came from the West, yet many could not think that they themselves could use radio and television for evangelistic purposes. At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, many Evangelical homes still did not have TV sets, which were seen by some as tools in the hands of the Communist propaganda machine.’

Third, the majority of Evangelicals did not have higher education. Reverend Rotaru, interviewed on 19 April 2009, indicated, ‘They lacked the skill to dialogue with the intelligentsia who were looking at religion from a scientific point of view.’ Churches looked at the educated with deep suspicion. When the first seminaries and Christian universities began to graduate students, they were largely rejected by church leaders who did not care for ‘Western-made theological education’ (Elliott, 1995, p. 67). Graduates could have applied their knowledge in the field of mass media, yet, with some exceptions, that effort did not materialize. When interviewed on 15 August 2006, Reverend Franchuk indicated:

The Church was not ready. Ministers were not prepared to do missionary work. I do not have enough knowledge. There are people who are now better educated than me. For some reason, they did not find acceptance in churches and, thus, did not want to bear any responsibility for various projects. Now many young people have education. They know foreign languages. Yet, for some reason, many decided to leave the Far East. They received invitations to emigrate, packed, and left.

Because of the marginalization of Evangelicals by the Soviet Communist regime, they could not realize new opportunities for outreach through mass media. When interviewed on 19 April 2009, Reverend Rotaru said, ‘Churches remained closed to the idea of employing mass media to tell people about Christ.’ Congregations continued to view mass media as a

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<sup>47</sup> Alexander T. Semchenko currently serves as President of the Brotherhood of Evangelical Christians in Russia (Rus. *VSEKh*). He is also one of the leading Russian Christian businessmen in charge of the *Teplotekhnika* Construction Company.



'tool of the devil', which was not to be used for the proclamation of God's Word. Thus, Christian influence upon society through mass media in the 1990s was very limited and largely remained an initiative of the West.

Regarding the relationship of Evangelicals with the West, it has to be said that it had its ups and downs throughout the 1990s. (1) Because of theological and cultural differences, and the dawn of a new geo-political reality, which no one could predict, many opportunities of cooperation were lost. (2) There was just too long of a cultural bridge to build between East and West in the 1990s. Western missionaries often disregarded issues of rich Russian culture and tradition while Evangelicals in the former Soviet Union had minimum knowledge about Western Christianity. Westerners tended to simplify the Gospel message, disregarding the close connection between Evangelical and Orthodox piety. The Four Spiritual Laws and oversimplified Plan of Salvation did not quite square with Russians. (3) The effort to repair relationships took valuable time, which cannot be made up now. Meanwhile, Evangelicals missed an opportunity to spiritually transform Russia. The Ukrainian pastor and theologian, Reverend Sergei Golovin, wrote:

For a while Christians considered the Soviet Union to be a great potential mission field; nevertheless when the door for missions opened wide, it happened unexpectedly. Despite thousands of missionaries and millions of dollars invested immediately in spreading the gospel in the post-communist world, after a short-term tide, church growth declined back to pre-perestroika level (Golovin, 2008, p. 27).

According to Reverend Franchuk, interviewed on 15 August 2006, 'God directed so many people into churches, and hundreds of them were prepared to hear the Word. Yet, we were not ready to nurture those people, feed them spiritually, and keep them in the church.' At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, society took an interest in Evangelical Christianity. However, by the mid-1990s it was evident that most newcomers were gradually losing interest in the church (Turlac, 2004a, p. 1). According to Solodovnikov, Russian Evangelicals are afraid of people that can think on their own.<sup>48</sup> 'They simply cannot be ruled over. Therefore, they should be banned from any kind of spiritual leadership in churches, mission, and charity organisations. Most importantly, they should not be allowed to preach so as not to influence the congregation' (Solodovnikov, 2004, p. 3).

Many newcomers, who initially were attracted by Evangelical way of life, increasingly turned to Russian Orthodoxy, which less frequently battled intellectualism, demanded less of a daily commitment to church life, and seemed to have better contact with secular culture. Solodovnikov wrote:

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<sup>48</sup> Dr. Solodovnikov (2004) emphasises that although Evangelicals boast of some intellectuals in their midst (even among pastors and regional presbyters), it is more the exception than the rule.

Only God alone knows how many representatives of the intelligentsia in Evangelical churches were disciplined and excommunicated. Many turned to Russian Orthodoxy or were disillusioned with Christianity. Many thinking Baptists today say, 'What a difference there is between Christ and Christianity!' (Solodovnikov, 2004, p. 3).

With increasing Russian Orthodox influence upon the ruling elite and the society, in the 1990s in countries like Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, people eventually began to regard Evangelicals in the same manner as they regarded them during the years of persecution – as *sectarians* (Vasilyev, 2007, p.1). During the Soviet period, sectarianism was largely viewed as something radical and opposed to the mainstream life of society. In the 1990s, it became a label for those whose beliefs differed from those of the 'Mother-Church', i.e., Russian Orthodoxy (Vasilyev, 2007, pp. 1–2).

#### **4.4 The Relationship between Evangelicals and the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1990s**

The relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and Evangelical believers had been a complicated one from the very beginning of the emerging Baptist movement in Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Orthodox Church aligned itself with the state and had considerable influence upon those in power and upon society in general. It was, among other things, used by tsarist power in Russia as an instrument of control over the masses as well as an agent of preservation of order in society (Knox, 2005, p. 5). Evangelicals, on the other hand, were insignificant in number and perceived as sectarians, i.e. those that split from the 'Mother Church'. The government of Russian empire persecuted the sectarians. In the Soviet Union, the Orthodox and Evangelical believers found themselves in the same camp, which we can describe as 'the persecuted church'. It had made their partial cooperation possible, mainly under state supervision.

Although common Evangelical and Orthodox believers did not have frequent interaction, the Soviet period saw increased cooperation between the parties. Evangelicals and the Orthodox participated in ecumenical worship services, organized annually at the Central Moscow Baptist Church. Together they attended forums of the Conference of European Churches and the Christian Peace Conference. Both AUCECB and the Russian Orthodox Church joined the World Council of Churches in the beginning of the 1960s.

Mikhail Zhidkov<sup>49</sup>, AUCECB Vice-President and Senior Pastor of the Central Moscow Baptist Church (Semchenko, 2012, p. 25), and Alexei Bychkov, AUCECB General Secretary, at different times served as presidents of the EBF. The Russian Orthodox

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<sup>49</sup> Reverend Mikhail Zhidkov is a son of Jacob Zhidkov, who served as AUCECB President until 1966. In his memoirs, Alexander Semchenko (2011) hints at Mikhail Zhidkov being a KGB agent with a nickname *Nevsky*.

Archbishop Nikodim<sup>50</sup> served as President of the Christian Peace Conference. In 1975, Nikodim was appointed President of the World Council of Churches. AUCECB Chairman of International Relations, Alexei Stoyan, frequently represented Soviet Evangelicals at the world's major inter-church forums. The dissidents from both sides kept in touch and encouraged each other in the common struggle against the communist regime.

When interviewed on 5 December 2006, Alexei Bychkov stated:

In spite of some degree of cooperation during the Soviet period, there was still some gap in the relationship between the Evangelical churches and the Orthodox. On the outside, the relationships looked good. Nevertheless, the Orthodox in general still had a negative attitude toward us. They were concerned with the fact that at least forty per cent of the church members came out of the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox had a feeling that we were 'stealing their sheep'.

Perry Glanzer indicated that the Russian Orthodox Church was used to having a religious monopoly in Russia prior to 1917, and, therefore, it looked at Gorbachev-offered freedom of religion as an opportunity to reassert its influence in Russia, 'The Orthodox hierarchy's tendency to view itself as the only legitimate Christian church in Russia made them increasingly suspicious of Western Christian missionaries who, they believed, posed a threat to the recovery of their previous hegemony' (Glanzer, 2002, p. 9).

As the Soviet Union collapsed and Russia emerged as its successor and an independent state, the status of the Russian Orthodox Church changed in Russian society. The Church assumed a dominant role in guiding the Russians through the process of recovering their self-identification after nearly seventy years of devastating rule by the CPSU. All bad things of the past were identified with communism, whereas the culture and new aspirations of the Russian State became closely linked to the Orthodox Church. The year 1990 was a decisive landmark in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, in which its future course of action was determined. Although liberation of the Russian Church from the hands of the Communist Party and the state began earlier, events in 1990 expedited the whole process. The Church felt for the first time that it was independent and could express its interests and aspirations without fear of implementing them. The revival of the Russian Orthodoxy began during Gorbachev's *Perestroika* with the 1988 celebration of the 1000<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Baptism of Kievan Rus, held in Moscow and Kiev.

The Evangelical believers reciprocated with treatment of the Orthodox as unbelievers. In fact, Evangelical ministers never used the phrase 'Orthodox believer'. For them this combination did not make sense. Most of them cited a wide gap between the theology of the

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<sup>50</sup> The Most Reverend Nikodim (Boris Rotov), born in 1929, was the Chairman of the Department of External Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church from 1960-1972. He was a proponent of active working relationship between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Vatican.

Orthodox Church and the lack of morals in the lives of 'so called believers'. When interviewed on 7 March 2006, the Reverend Victor Loginov indicated, 'Women come into Orthodox churches wearing shawls. People put up candles and pray to the saints. However, they return home and get drunk, beat up their family members and have fights. They lead lives of double standard.'

Evangelical believers often saw the Orthodox as taking the Christian life easy and as refusing to take a 'narrow path to God'. They emphasized the absence of daily living in Christ among the Orthodox, which was strongly stressed by the Evangelicals. According to Loginov, 'the Orthodox understand Christian faith as being far away from daily reality. They live in their own dimension, and Christ lives in His own.'

In 1990, as the Communist Party gave up its monopoly on power in the U.S.S.R., millions of Russians began to frequent Orthodox Church liturgies, partake in the holy Eucharist and baptize children. New churches opened their doors in different locations in Russia and Ukraine. The restoration of dozens of churches and monasteries resulted in the subsequent return of the property to the Orthodox Church.

Registration of sixteen new Orthodox parishes took place in 1987, followed by more than 800 churches being registered in 1988. By 1989, the Russian Orthodox Church numbered 7,549 parishes. The number of monasteries grew from eighteen in 1987 to thirty-five in 1989 (Davis, 1995, p. 66). It has to be remembered that Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign was responsible for the destruction of 50 percent of Orthodox Church buildings.

A survey conducted in 1993 and 1994 demonstrated that Russians trusted the Orthodox Church more than any public institution, including entities as disparate as the law courts, trade unions, private enterprise, the media, the army, and the government. A 1999 survey found that 23 percent of respondents had a 'great deal' and 46 percent a 'fair amount' of confidence in the Russian Orthodox Church, placing it above other public institutions (Knox, 2005, p. 7).

The Russian Orthodox Patriarch began to attend public functions. During the inauguration of the first Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, he was one of the main figures giving his blessing to the new Russian ruler. Church clergy began to be invited to different state events. Top government officials began frequenting Easter and Christmas Orthodox liturgies. According to Bychkov, interviewed on 5 December 2006, 'from the church persecuted, the status of the Russian Orthodoxy changed to the church triumphant.'

When the Russian government realized that the world spiritual centres of Baptist, Pentecostal, Adventist and other denominations were located outside of Russia, while the centre of Russian Orthodoxy was located in Moscow, it viewed the Orthodox a 'home church' rather than a 'foreign sect' (Mitrokhin, p. 319).

The change in relations between the Orthodox and the Evangelical churches did not go unnoticed. As the Orthodox Church gained ground and significance in Russian society and became linked more and more to the idea of the resurrection of the Russian idea, it began to speak to the Evangelicals from the position of power and authority. When Billy Graham conducted a three-day evangelistic campaign at Moscow's Olympic Stadium in 1992, he was met with a cold reception from the Orthodox Church. This signalled the change of attitude toward Evangelicals on the part of the dominant church in Russia. As thousands of Moscovites streamed into the Olympic Sport Complex, they were met by the Orthodox believers, who held posters that blamed the Evangelicals for being 'traitors of the Mother-Church'.

Patriarch Aleksii II made his position on foreign religious involvement in Russia quite clear. He stated that the work of the Russian Church for the rebirth of society is threatened by the expansion of foreign missions in Russia. According to Aleksii, 'there is a danger of similar division on religious grounds, the Patriarchate wants to prevent this and to help our society be stable' (Knox, 2005, p. 77).

Like in the times of monarchical rule in Russia, the Church aligned itself closely with the state. Local priests gained unprecedented authority in the eyes of the local state officials. Priests were consulted on all matters of faith and outreach, including questions whether to allow the Evangelical outreach and their very presence in certain towns and villages. According to Savinsky (interviewed on 16 January 2007), 'there is a strong interrelationship between the Evangelical churches and the Russian Orthodox Church. Whenever Evangelical missionaries wanted to conduct evangelism, they had to get permission not only from local authorities but also the Orthodox priest.'

Describing the change in relationship between the Orthodox and Evangelicals, Bychkov (interviewed on 5 December 2006) indicated that relationships with the Russian Orthodox Church was better in the past:

When all of us were persecuted. We were more patient and friendlier back then. These days the Orthodox stand against all denominations that exist in Russia. I cannot say this about all Orthodox believers, yet it is true about the majority of them.

In the 1990s, the Orthodox opposed educational projects started by Russian Evangelicals in cooperation with their American brothers and sisters. A prime example of this is the ordeal which the leaders of the Russian-American Institute had to face. According to Bychkov (interviewed 5 December 2006), 'About a dozen times the Orthodox and monarchists got together to protest the construction of the buildings of the institute.' The Orthodox Church quickly pulled its support from the CoMission's religious education project

for public schools as well as for other ecumenical initiatives. Difficulties existed even in bringing various Evangelical groups together. Sawatsky observed:

There were new efforts at inter-church relationship building following 1989. One early idea was to buy a building opposite the central Baptist church in Moscow as an interchurch centre - it would enable other evangelical Protestant groups to come together, Western representatives would share a common office and their entire contribution to the new mission thrust was to be cooperative. By the time the authorities had sorted out whether the U.S.S.R., Russia, Moscow, or the local district owned the building, years had passed. One initiative was an attempt by the Peter Deyneka organisation to establish an Evangelical Association whose purpose was to mediate the process of church registrations, and to secure recognition of denominations after the 1997 legal revisions (Sawatsky, 2007, p. 28).

The Russian Orthodox Church in the 1990s became so influential that it lobbied for certain laws in the Duma, the lower chamber of the Russian Parliament (Rus. *Federal'noe sobraniye*). The Orthodox Church felt that freedoms granted by the Russian Constitution of 1993 were too extensive and threatened the well-being of the church. In his address in Kostroma, Aleksii II stressed the desire of the Moscow Patriarchate to 'suggest to the Parliament that it pass a law proclaiming a moratorium on religious propaganda from outside' (Knox, 2005, p. 77).

In conclusion, it is important to point out that both parties, Evangelical and Orthodox believers, share a difficult history. On one hand, the Orthodox Church had always been the majority church, which had little tolerance for Evangelicals, which it treated as sectarians. On the other hand, communist oppression in the 1917–1980s forced both Evangelicals and the Orthodox to find creative ways of cooperation to counter the destructive influence of communism and preserve their own identity. The cooperation, thus, was unnatural to both parties that historically were far from any kind of reconciliation of their theological differences.

According to Bychkov (interviewed 5 December 2006), cooperation between Evangelical churches and the Orthodox ended with the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the establishment of Russia's independence. The Orthodox Church closely aligned itself with the government and gradually retained its prestige and privileged position among Russia's religious denominations.

Evangelicals, lacking any lasting tradition of coexistence and active cooperation with secular authorities prior to the Soviet period and holding to the principle of the separation of the Church and State, found themselves in the fold of 'sects'. In the minds of ordinary Russians, Baptists were identified more with the West and such religious groups as Jehovah's Witnesses and Adventists, rather than traditional Christian churches (Roman Catholic and the Orthodox). As the result of the Soviet anti-religious propaganda, some Russians did not even think that Baptists were Christians.

In spite of a complicated and often antagonistic relationship between the Evangelical churches and the Orthodox, because the Evangelical movement began in Russia and Ukraine, they were bound to be influenced by the predominantly Orthodox culture with its theological and liturgical traditions, as well as by popular customs. In some instances, worship, theological nuances, and traditions of Evangelical churches had more of the Orthodox flavour than a resemblance to Baptist theology and the ecclesiology of Western churches. Because of the lasting history of persecutions for their faith, Russian Evangelicals did not have a chance to develop their own theology and liturgical principles.

The relationship between the Evangelicals and the Orthodox flourished when both denominations were under pressure from the Soviet state (1920s - mid-1980s). The break-up of the Soviet Union and the establishment of new independent Russia brought with it a rise of the influence of the Orthodox Church and its close cooperation with the authorities. Close to 8,000 parishes were reopened between 1990 and 1995, according to Patriarch Alexii. More than 300 million U.S. dollars were invested in restoration of the iconic Cathedral of Christ the Saviour alone (Rus. *Khram Khrista Spasitelya*). This inevitably lifted the Moscow Patriarchate to the position of considerable advantage over Russian religious groups, which Evangelicals, who were too insignificant in number and influence, could not match. Because the Orthodox always regarded Russia as their canonical territory, any competition for hearts and minds of Russians was hardly tolerated by the end of 1990s. Such attitudes caused tensions in relationships with the Orthodox and limited the Evangelical ability to transform the post-Soviet society.

According to Evangelical ministers and ordinary church members, the challenge of freedom proved to be much greater than the challenge of persecution. Whereas during persecution, believers could easily distinguish between the idea of the 'holy community' and the world (or between those who belonged to God and those who were children of Satan), freedom brought diversity which churches found hard to accept (Sergienko, 2010b, p. 1). There was no longer a clear divide in place with many areas of life falling under the 'grey area'.

In most of the interviews conducted for this thesis in the former Soviet Union and North America, ministers who lived through the changes of the 1990s agree that the Evangelical churches were not ready either for the collapse of the U.S.S.R. or for the coming freedom of religion. When interviewed on 7 March 2006, Reverend Victor Loginov, Bishop of UCEBCM in 1992-94, stated:

Churches were definitely not ready for the events of 1990s. Believers did not take advantage of all opportunities. Christians in Russia and America prayed for freedom, but I think that neither really could

foresee that freedom would come in the way it did. We went from a KGB-controlled society, when we could not even approach foreign tourists, to total freedom.

Freedom brought challenges to long-established church traditions in Scripture interpretation and application, style of leadership, music and worship, as well as dress code (Sergienko, 2010b, p.1). Churches found it hard to change and adjust to new times. The inability to travel during Soviet times, limited exposure to other theological and religious traditions, as well as low levels of education made it difficult for local churches to face a changing world (Medvedev, 1989, p. 712). It was easier for them to revert to a 'persecution mentality', which for them was all too familiar. The end of the 1990s witnessed more homilies preached from the Evangelical pulpits comparing 'the blessed times of persecution to the evil age of freedom' (Sergienko, 2004, p. 12). Evangelical ministers in private conversations often express nostalgia for the times when life was black and white, and when 'order' prevailed in the church.

Today, the RUECB boasts 1,816 churches with 75,160 baptized believers (2012c), while Ukraine claims to be the second largest union-member of the EBF with 2,382 churches and 125,509 believers.<sup>51</sup> UCEBCM has the greatest number of Evangelical believers (2012b)<sup>52</sup> per capita in the former Soviet Union (about 0.5% of the total population of the country) (2012a).

## **4.5 The State and the Church**

### **4.5.1 The History of Forming of the Suffering Church**

Following the collapse of communism in the U.S.S.R., the church that emerged was a suffering church. Since the late 1920s, Evangelicals had endured mistreatment, persecution, and state manipulation intended to eliminate Christianity in the Soviet Union. Atheists labelled religion the 'opium for the people' (Service, 2004, pp. 442-443).

Lev Mitrokhin outlined two distinct periods in church-state relations: the period of 'Militant Atheism' (1920s–1930s) and the period of so-called 'Scientific Atheism' (1950s–1980s) (Mitrokhin, 1997, pp. 42-62). Persecution in the period of 'Militant Atheism' was more physical in nature. Its proponents tried to do away with Christians as bearers of a foreign ideology of the enemy. Christianity was considered out-dated and did not have any future in

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<sup>51</sup> These churches are united into All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Associations (AUUECBA) led by Reverend Vyacheslav Nesteruk. In the statistics of the EBF, Ukraine is slightly behind the Baptist Union of Great Britain, which numbers 132,703 baptized believers. Ukraine holds the first place in EBF statistics in the number of churches.

<sup>52</sup> The EBF statistics shows the number of believers in the UECBCM to be 19,604. They worship in 481 churches. Author's travel and conversation with Moldavian pastors indicates a more conservative statistics of close to 400 churches and mission points, where evangelistic work just had been started.



the new Soviet society. For this very reason, the physical elimination of Soviet Evangelicals took mass forms at the end of the 1920s and into 1930s.

'Militant Atheism' as a movement, subsided during World War II when leaders of the CPSU recognized that believers were ready to defend their homeland from the enemy (Shamgunov, 2009, p. 10). After the war, it was no longer possible to brand believers as enemies of the Soviet state. However, in the 1950s, the state decided to target religious views of Christians who, as many thought, dragged the whole society into the past. Nikita Khrushchev, who succeeded Stalin as Prime Minister and CPSU Secretary in the 1950s, expanded Stalin's efforts of eradicating Christianity.

The CPSU programme 'Concerning the Mistakes in Scientific and Atheistic Propaganda among the Population', published on 11 November 1954, launched the period of scientific atheism (Shkarovsky, 2005, pp. 23-24). The key term used in the programme was 'education'. The CPSU programme saw the role of atheistic propagandists in 'cultivation of a new sort of man who would be spiritually, physically, and morally sound' (1964). When interviewed on 10 June 2007, George Boltnew, stated (or states) that 'legions of propagandists who worked systematically in schools and universities sought to convince youth that there was no God.'

The CPSU made decisions for the entire country. It officially stood against any form of religion. Moreover, the CPSU promoted an atheistic worldview through lectures and public events. The army and institutions of higher learning became instruments for 'ideological brainwashing' of young people. Instructors in universities and the army made sure that no one deviated from the 'party line.' The CPSU did not tolerate any competition or compromise. Geoffrey Hosking wrote:

The Soviet State, with its all-embracing ideology, rapidly took on itself ... many of the claims and attributes of an established church. It was prone, therefore, to regard religious movements, and particularly the formerly established Russian Orthodox Church, as its rivals (Hosking, 1992, p. 227).

The government made an effort to turn abandoned Orthodox churches into museums of atheism with displays of atheistic propaganda and anti-religious materials. A class in atheism was mandatory for all high school students. Atheistic concepts permeated the school curriculum as a whole. Instructors often visited factories and industrial plants to lecture on atheism. They used different 'scientific' reasons to prove that God did not exist. Atheism was said to use a scientific way of thought whereas religion, a non-scientific and backward way of thinking. Atheist instructors criticized the lifestyle of Christians, mocking them for abstinence from dancing, drinking, and watching movies. To counter the predominant atheistic culture, churches created programmes for children and youth, which kept them in the community of faith but also promoted their isolation from secular culture.

At that period, Evangelicals were in ideological competition with the Soviet atheist establishment. Believers presented a constant challenge to the dominant system. They could be loosely characterized as dissidents. Boobbyer discussing the nature of dissent in the Soviet Union stated:

Although the dissident movement manifested itself in specific ways, it is not easy to define 'dissent' in the Soviet context. Some people spoke out boldly against the Soviet regime, while others discreetly tried to reform it from within (Boobbyer, 2009, p. 2).

Evangelical churches survived the pressures that challenged their beliefs. Under pressure from the government for 72 years, the church suffered much, but it also learned to adapt to the circumstances it faced. According to Hosking:

Baptists were in many ways better suited to the pressures of Soviet society than was the Orthodox Church. They were accustomed to coping with state persecution. Their ministers were used to combining secular jobs with their pastoral work. Believers were already in the habit of improvising Sunday schools and prayer meetings in each other's homes (Hosking, 1992, p. 237).

As noted above, the church presented a major threat to communist ideology. The government made every effort to confine church activities inside the walls of church buildings and to deny Christians any influence upon society. It even attempted to promote communist ideology within church walls. Even though the Soviet government claimed that believers in the U.S.S.R. had freedom, the actual situation was another matter. The state sought to destroy Christianity, which it saw as its rival for control of people's hearts and minds.

The church survived the period of extreme persecution by forming a culture behind church walls and 'locking itself within', so to speak. According to the 13 April 2007 interview with Reverend Leonid Kartavenko of the RUECB, 'churches did not lock themselves within by choice. Rather, the Soviet government forced them to do so. Communists limited options for survival, and churches had to adapt or perish. Churches could not conduct any charity or missionary work outside registered church buildings. Communities of believers survived by creating a closed circle in which they established their own subculture that did not have much in common with the outside world.'

At the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, Evangelicals asked how many restrictions could churches tolerate, what type of ideological pressure could the church endure, and how were they to view the possibility of compromise with atheistic authorities in certain issues of faith and practice (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 130).

At the beginning of the 1960s, Evangelicals in the U.S.S.R. split into two groups: registered (Rus. *Registrirrovannye*) and unregistered (*Neregistrirrovannye*). Unregistered believers were also commonly called *Otdelennye* (Separatists). Registered groups remained within the AUCECB, while unregistered churches formed the Council of Churches of

Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CCECB, commonly known as *Sovet tserkvey*) (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 227-235).

Registered Evangelicals accepted some governmental restrictions imposed upon churches, though the majority did not follow them closely, often ignoring demands of the authorities (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 179). Unregistered churches were a minority that protested against conditions imposed by the government and endured harsh persecution from the authorities. In the 1970s, the government allowed some of the unregistered churches to register independently of any union (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 275-278). Communities of believers who accepted this offer were permitted to hold services in church buildings as opposed to having them under open skies or in remote areas. Both registered and unregistered churches learned to adapt to existing conditions in order to survive in spite of government infiltration and interference (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 447-467).

Since the government could not control unregistered churches through registration, it found other means to pressure and restrict them. The State Security Committee (KGB) established a special department that dealt with religious affairs. Its informers were able to infiltrate churches and report to the government on their activities. The KGB invested heavily in young people with the hope that with time they would become church leaders and would be able to undermine church work from the inside. According to 16 January 2007 interview with church historian Sergey Savinsky, 'the reestablishment of Evangelical churches after World War II and the fact that they survived into the 1990s was God's miracle.'

In some parts of the Soviet Union, such as Western Ukraine, Moldova and the Baltic republics, registered churches thrived while unregistered congregations thrived as well (such as churches in Uzlovaya (Tul'skaya Oblast'), Kiev, Khartsizsk (Donetskaya Oblast'), and Dedovsk (Moscow Oblast') registered large numbers of believers.<sup>53</sup> Large congregations existed in Moscow, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) (*Poklonnaya Gora* Church), Alma-Ata, Odessa, Tallinn (Oleviste), and Novosibirsk.<sup>54</sup> In spite of harassment, members were well dressed and some possessed cars. Believers, especially in unregistered churches, had large families. According to 16 January 2007 interview with Reverend Savinsky, 'believers owed their survival to God and not to human powers' (Savinsky, 2007, p. 3).

Members of Evangelical churches could not attend institutions of higher learning. Those believers who already enrolled experienced pressure to abandon their faith. In spite of the

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<sup>53</sup> Gennady Kryuchkov (Uzlovaya), Mikhail Shaptala (Khartsizsk), and Mikhail Rumatchik (Dedovsk) pastored unregistered congregations in the 1970s-1980s.

<sup>54</sup> Mikhail Zhidkov (Moscow), Sergey Fadyukhin, Piotr Konovalchik (Leningrad – St. Petersburg), Nikolai Kolesnikov (Alma-Ata), E. Z. Ivanov (Odessa), Oswald Tyark (Oleviste) and Yakov (Jacob) Fast pastored registered congregations in the 1970s – 1980s.

difficulties Christians faced, Victor Loginov, former AUCECB Assistant Senior Presbyter for the Moldovian S.S.R. (1979–1992), when interviewed on 7 March 2006, identified some positive aspects amidst the culture of persecution: ‘There was clarity in the situation. We knew the enemy. We served God faithfully and stood firm against the dominant ideology.’

State publishing houses printed hundreds of books on atheism at the same time that churches could not publish Christian materials. When interviewed on 16 January 2007, Sergey Savinsky stated that ‘for years, Evangelicals could not publish their own history. When they finally received permission in 1989, they could not publish the history in its original version. Soviet censors edited it to suit the state’s anti-religious purposes.’

In the Khrushchev anti-religious campaign of 1959-1964 (Shamgunov, 2009, p. 11), persecution operated on several levels. First, Christians experienced pressure in public life. According to the Estonian Baptist historian, Toivo Pilli, atheists branded believers as outcasts and backward people. Evangelicals had very limited influence upon Soviet society (Pilli, 2001). Since the AUCECB represented the largest non-Orthodox Protestant group in the country, the state attempted to force other non-Orthodox groups to join it. The term ‘Baptist’ was commonly applied also to Seventh-day Adventists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.<sup>55</sup>

Under various pretexts, the state closed thousands of churches (Nikol'skaya, 2001). According to an expert on Russian Evangelicals, Walter Sawatsky, five of six Evangelical church buildings in Moscow were confiscated by the state. Only one Baptist church was left functioning in Leningrad. It is estimated that 60 percent of churches all over the country were closed (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 48). The number of Russian Orthodox churches declined from 22,000 to 7,000 in 1965 (Pospelovsky, 1987, p.83). Regarding the 1962 closure of the AUCECB church in Chisinau, Moldavia, Vasilii Davnyi stated:

The Senior Presbyter for Moldavia announced to us that our church building was going to be taken by the State, which decided to build a road that was to go through the church property. He said that the State Superintendent of Religious Affairs said that church members should come and demolish the building with their own hands to assist the State. We came and took materials that were of any value in hope to use them elsewhere. For the next three years, we did not have a place where we could meet (Davyi, 2008, p. 25).

According to some estimates, 50,000 clergy were executed under Stalin and Khrushchev (Emelyanov, 2009). The number of laity most likely greatly exceeded this figure (Ostling, 2001). Mark Elliott summarized:

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<sup>55</sup> In Moscow, Seventh-day Adventists held their services at the Central Moscow Baptist Church. Some Soviet Pentecostal congregations, which were refused State registration, found refuge under the umbrella of the AUCECB.

Waves of trauma engulfed every generation, without exception: World War I, revolution, civil war, famine, collectivisation, political repression including purges, mass arrests, and imprisonments, World War II, and the forced incorporation of Western borderlands after the war. All spelled enormous hardship, destruction, and death. The toll in terms of lives prematurely cut short may have exceeded 60 million. What made these multiple traumas even worse; all talk of death, suffering, and personal injury—physical and mental—at the hands of the Soviet regime had to be suppressed out of fear of reprisals (Elliott, 2003).

In the 1960s, the authorities banned the training of clergy and services held outside church walls. Pressured by the government through church leaders, candidates for baptism had to provide identification and passport information (Lane, 1978, p. 34). The state authorities forced churches to extend the waiting period for baptismal candidates up to three years (Savinsky, 2001, pp. 322-327). Only young people after the age of 18 years could be baptized. Those serving in the Soviet Army could not be members of Evangelical churches. Any breach of these regulations by clergy led to the disallowance of state registration for them. Criticizing atheistic policies resulted in retirement for dozens of pastors while others found themselves imprisoned. ‘The frightened and disorganised clergy suffered in silence’ (Gleb Yakunin, p. 36).

In 1961, the government forbade clergy from applying disciplinary measures to the faithful. Pastors became employees of a group of lay members, (Rus. *Ispolorgan*), who administered the church affairs. The state attempted to achieve more defections from clergy to atheism, though with little success. High taxes on pastors’ income discouraged them from continuing their ministry.

Soviet psychiatrists considered highly educated people who became religious believers at a mature age to be suffering from a psychotic disorder. The state applied this diagnosis to influential ministers who could not be charged with any other crime in order to remove them from their pulpits (Derwinski, 1986, p. 77). For example, a psychiatrist diagnosed Olga Skrebets, a 33-year-old medical doctor, as suffering from an early stage of schizophrenia. Authorities dispatched her to a psychiatric hospital in Kiev after her withdrawal from the Communist Party in 1971 for religious reasons (Pospelovsky, 1988, p. 180). Similarly, in 1976, Soviet police arrested the 44-year-old Evangelical, Alexander Yankovich, who had engaged in unofficial writing and the duplication of religious literature since 1957. A psychiatrist declared him insane in 1976.

The state placed restrictions upon religious upbringing of children in believers’ homes and restricted child attendance of churches. In an interview, conducted on 11 April 1996, Vasiliy Perebikovskiy indicated:

In 1959, Evangelical church in Kishinev [Moldavia] went through a considerable turmoil. The government did not allow children to come into the sanctuary and attend worship services. I had small children, which I usually took with me to church. In spite of prohibitions, many believers brought their children anyway. Brothers from the church council warned us to leave children at home. Even the

[AUCECB] Senior Presbyter [for Moldavian S.S.R.] Dmitry Ivanovich Ponomarchuk was saying that 'children understood nothing. They only disturb the worship service and run here and there. They are to come to church when they grow up.'

Some Evangelicals experienced deprivation of parental rights for teaching religion to their children. Since 1961, children could no longer be present in church services (Savinsky, 2001, p. 322). The state prohibited Sunday school education (Pospelovsky, 1987, p. 84). According to Christel Lane, the author of the first sociological study of religion in a communist and militantly atheist society, persecution often resulted from worship and performance of religious rituals in private homes or in unregistered churches. People were often baptized and married in secret to avoid records being provided to the state (Lane, 1978, p. 44).

In the 1960s, anti-religious education and propaganda intensified. In 1960, the Central Committee of the CPSU revived the concept of 'individual work' among believers, which had been widely used in the 1930s. Atheist tutors from the CPSU, the *Komsomol*, the *Znanie* Society, and the *Profsoyuzy* (trade unions) visited influential believers in their homes in attempt to convince them to forsake the church. In most cases, these propagandists were workmates of the believers. If this approach did not work, administrative harassment would follow at work or school. Authorities typically confined believers to low-paying jobs and trade schools. Colleges expelled their children (Pospelovsky, 1987, p. 98).

A new phase of anti-religious persecution began in the early 1970s. Yuri Andropov, Chairman of the all-powerful KGB (1967–1982), headed the campaign. The new wave of persecution followed the 1975 amendments to 1929 anti-religious legislation and the 25<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPSU that took place in Moscow from 24 February to 5 March 1976. Between 1971–1975, over 30 doctoral and 400 masters' dissertations on the subject of atheism and criticism of religion were defended. In 1974, the state organized a conference on 'The Topical Problems of the History of Religion and Atheism in the Light of Marxist-Leninist Scholarship' in Leningrad in an attempt to strengthen anti-religious propaganda (Pospelovsky, 1987, pp. 111-112). The Soviet state disguised its persecution to create a positive image abroad (Anderson, 1994, p. 3).

Atheistic propagandists abused and misrepresented the very name *Baptist*, portraying Evangelicals as 'people with problems' and as members of a 'strange cult'. Atheistic instructors spread rumours that Christians would turn off lights during worship, sacrifice their children, and participate in sexual orgies. People treated believers as agents of foreign powers who spread religious propaganda and Western views that undermined Soviet socialist society. When interviewed on 2 November 2006, Ruvim Voloshin, Vice-President of the RUECB, pointed out that many people often mistook Pentecostals, Adventists, and Jehovah's

Witnesses as Baptists since they belonged to a 'religious camp'. This mistreatment of Baptists by atheistic authorities created a distorted image of them in the minds of Soviet people that subsequently, limited the ability of Evangelicals to influence society after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, some Protestants chose not to associate themselves with the name *Baptist* for this very reason. Undoubtedly, atheistic propaganda somewhat succeeded in compromising the term *Baptist*.

In spite of heavy persecution from the state, Evangelicals appreciated the fact that they had a clear identity. When interviewed on 2 November 2006, Ruvim Voloshin said that they knew who they were and where the government stood in relation to them. Evangelicals knew who was part of 'the flock' and who was not. They also enjoyed the support of Christians from the West who were transmitting religious broadcasts into the U.S.S.R.

The major task of Protestants in the U.S.S.R. was to find ways to survive by being good citizens, demonstrating an excellent work ethic, and worshipping in compliance with the restrictions that existed at the time. Personal contact served as a great tool of propagation of one's faith. When interviewed on 7 March 2006, Victor Loginov stated, 'Baptists were hated. Yet, at the same time, people trusted believers they knew personally. Believers did their work well, so people knew that if I was Baptist, I would do my work well.'

Often in the interviews it was indicated that being a believer before the 1990s meant that one was despised and harassed. People in churches were committed to the common cause. In contrast to the times of persecution, with the coming of freedom, ministers lost the ability to distinguish between 'wolves' and 'sheep'.

The creation of divisions among evangelicals was one of the tools that the state used to weaken the movement. Authorities put pressure upon all churches, however, and ministers had a choice of how to react. In the 1960s, after the split in Evangelical ranks, when the government reached its goal, it applied less pressure upon registered churches that belonged to the AUCECB and intensified harsh persecution of unregistered CCECB congregations. When interviewed on 11 April 1996, Vasiliy Perebikovskiy recalled the circumstances of the split in Kishinev Evangelical Church, Moldova that met on Vokzal'naya Street, 2:

Our church on Vokzal'naya Street was united and friendly. We did not know the word 'split' before. But when AUCECB sent first Senior Presbyter Frol R. Astakhov and then Dmitry I. Ponomarchuk to 'establish order,' everything changed. By 1960, the split was more than evident. Our group split from the 'official' church, and we started meeting in homes. We still missed being a part of a bigger fellowship and, out of respect, tried not to meet for prayer during regular worship service times of the 'official' church. We prayed that God would interfere and resolve this difficult situation. Later, a number of people from the registered church joined us, and we founded the unregistered church in Kishinev. It numbered 170 people. The 'official' church had close to 350 members. Some of us, at first, still attended Sunday worship services on Vokzal'naya Street. As time went by, we became more organised by electing a church council and putting together a choir. After that we stopped attending services at the church on Vokzal'naya Street.

The state used the split for propaganda purposes. It desired to show that Evangelicals were not trustworthy because they fought among themselves. Indeed, the relationship between registered and unregistered churches was quite unpleasant. Mutual accusations mounted. Those who belonged to the CCECB often accused members of AUCECB churches of compromise with the atheistic state, whereas members of registered churches held to the position that they were to be lawful citizens of the country in which they lived. Believers from registered churches thought that CCECB followers brought upon themselves harsh persecution by their behaviour and disrespect toward authorities.

Cities and even some small towns had one registered and one unregistered congregation with no fellowship between the two. People who observed this phenomenon could not understand why believers did not communicate with each other. Though most scholars agree that the split had been orchestrated by the Soviet state, both registered and unregistered Baptists thought that defence of the truth of the Bible was at stake. The division stands even to this day in spite of the dawn of new political realities.

In the face of persecution and pressure from state authorities, churches had to protect themselves in order to survive. To this end, Evangelicals created a special internal church culture which was closed to the world but which provided church members with an environment for spiritual nourishment. When interviewed on 25 August 2007, Victor Levashov, RUECB Superintendent for North Caucasus, called it 'the mentality of self-righteousness.' This means that they are persecuted because of their righteousness and following example of Jesus who was persecuted.

Evangelicals may have had no choice but to lock themselves behind the walls of their churches. Only in churches could Christians find comfort and acceptance as the outside world had become very hostile toward them. They cherished every opportunity to attend worship services, which often lasted for hours. Many registered churches held services on weekdays in addition to two Sunday services.

Soviet society typically held two views of Evangelicals: hostile in general, but sometimes positive toward individual believers. Positive views were an exception and were usually on an individual basis of getting to know the believer, for example, in the workplace or as neighbours. Soviet citizens usually perceived believers to be strange in their behaviour, and abnormal in the sense that they did not have the same values as the rest of the population. In 31 March 2006 interview, Reverend Zhironov said, 'to be Evangelical, one had to be out of his mind. People laughed at Christians. They were not appreciated.'



The U.S.S.R. was based upon the idea of equality of all citizens, which in practice was far from reality. People who held to the above views readily accepted atheistic propaganda and based their opinions about believers upon rumours.

Interactions in school or at work formed the basis for the second perspective of Evangelicals. People from this group were more likely to have a positive opinion of Christians. Some of them came to faith, seeing examples of Christian holy living, though not many. Throughout the Soviet period, churches maintained an isolationist mentality, requiring new converts to be different from the 'world' in their view and give up their 'worldly relationships'. Because 'now they were new creation', churches required them to abstain from attending birthday parties and weddings of their old friends as well as other 'worldly' social activities. A clear break with the world served as the best evidence of the seriousness of one's Christian intentions.

When interviewed on 25 August 2007, Reverend Victor Levashov indicated that 'Evangelical separation from Soviet society reinforced the view of them as a foreign sect that stood in opposition, not only to an atheist government, but also to the traditional Russian Orthodox.' Evangelical churches differ from the Orthodox in liturgical practice as well as the calendar, for example, celebrating Christmas together with the West on 25<sup>th</sup> December.

Persecutions in practice led to the development of a 'theology of suffering' (Ton, 2002).<sup>56</sup> Constantine Prokhorov preferred to use a term 'the way of tears' (Prokhorov, 2013, p. 326). Believers saw suffering for Christ as a mark of true faith (2 Tim. 3:12), esteeming it more than education. They valued wisdom gained from prison experience more highly than formal schooling (Dubrovsky, 2011, pp. 27-44). In his memoirs, Karl Sedletskiy referred to suffering of Soviet believers by using a term 'Siberian seminary,' which meant imprisonment or exile to Siberia (Sedletskiy, 1993, pp. 91-93).

Preaching in churches was more a narration of one's life story than a methodical exposition of biblical texts, even though Soviet Evangelicals held the Scriptures in high esteem (Prokopchuk, 2011, pp. 265-285).<sup>57</sup> Ministers taught the faithful to exercise humility and to exhibit high moral standards in their lives (1 John 2:2) (Prokhorov, 2013, pp. 236-245). The greatest privilege of every follower of Christ was to suffer for Him (Romans 8:18). Believers understood present suffering as a means of attaining future glory (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 337-358). Soviet Evangelicals viewed themselves as following the example of Jesus'

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<sup>56</sup> Romanian theologian Dr. Joseph Ton is to be credited with the most frequent use of the term among East-European Evangelicals (Rom. *Teologia suferintei*). See TON, I. 2002. *Suferință, martiraj și răsplătire în cer*, Oradea, Editura Cartea Crestina.

<sup>57</sup> Evangelicals in Moldavia developed an expression, which refers to advantage of practical life experience over academic study, 'Experience beats academics.' (Rom. *Practica bate gramatica*).

disciples, Peter and John, who suffered for their faith (Acts 5:9). They also identified with Stephen who was stoned to death (Acts 5:5; 7:58–60), and Paul who was jailed and beaten for preaching Christ (Acts 16:24). Soviet Evangelicals compared themselves to Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to his words (Luke 10:39), while they identified the church in the West with Martha who kept herself busy with the preparation of food (Luke 10:40). In the story, Martha complained to Jesus that Mary was not helping her. However, Jesus told her that Mary chose a better part. Soviet Evangelicals applied the image of Martha to the free Christians in the West who were trying to change the world by producing different missionary programmes. Although Martha-like Western Christians were trying to smuggle Bibles and other Christian literature into Russia, Christians in the Soviet Union saw themselves in the image of Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus. Soviet Evangelicals metaphorically interpreted Christian radio broadcasts and literature as spiritual food provided to them by 'Martha' that is, Christians from the West.

Because of persecutions, Evangelical congregations could not publish Bibles and other Christian materials. In order to print their own materials, believers often used *Samizdat* (self-published materials). Religious groups, dissidents, and many others who wanted to avoid official censors carried out such illegal publishing (Pospelovsky, 1988, pp. 184–185). The CCECB operated a number of printing presses throughout the U.S.S.R. under the umbrella of *Khristianin* (Christian) Publishing that produced Bibles and hymnals.

In conditions of isolation from the rest of the Christian world, Soviet Evangelicals developed extensive contacts among their churches. Young people from city churches often visited neighbouring towns in order to encourage faith of believers from smaller congregations. Weddings and funerals also served as effective means of evangelism and outreach (Turlac, 2010, p. 15).

Because of isolation and the existence of the culture of persecution, the theology of Evangelicals in the U.S.S.R. grew increasingly eschatological in its nature. Christians viewed the present age as a time of evil in which Satan was doing everything to destroy the church. On the other hand, believers saw the future in terms of God's reign and an absence of suffering. Preaching stressed an eschatological emphasis upon believers' readiness to meet Christ. Baptist hymnology also emphasised the difference between present conditions on earth and bliss in heaven.

#### **4.6 Evangelicals and Military Service**

During World War II (in the U.S.S.R. it was called The Great Patriotic War) many Evangelicals found themselves in an insidious situation. On one hand, they loved their

motherland but, on the other hand, many of them acknowledged that among Germans were some of their brothers and sisters that shared with them common beliefs (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 112-120).<sup>58</sup>

Mikhail Petrov stated that during World War II, as the German Army was occupying Soviet territory, a number of Russian Orthodox and Evangelical churches, previously closed by the Soviets, were re-opened. Thus, some Evangelicals found themselves in a situation where they could have been called collaborators with the Nazis (Petrov). At the same time, when the Red Army was retreating under the German military assault, Joseph Stalin appealed for help to the Russian Orthodox Church. Leaders of Evangelicals likewise were called to appeal to their fellow brothers and sisters for defence of the motherland (Petrov).

Yakov Zhidkov, who was in GULAG camp on *Kolyma* for 'counter revolutionary activities,' together with some other leaders, issued a letter on 28 June 1941 to all Evangelicals. In this document, he called on believers to fully support the Soviet government in the war with Nazi Germany. Zhidkov called the Evangelicals to join the underground movement of Partisans to help the Red Army in fighting the Germans (Zhidkov, 1941). The letter also stated multiple arguments in favour of military service of believers (Petrov).

Mikhail Orlov (Orloff), one of the Evangelical leaders, travelled all over the country trying to explain the position of Soviet Evangelicals to the local authorities (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 40). The Central Moscow Baptist Church, which experienced extreme pressure from the atheistic state before the war, suddenly was allowed to hold prayer services in support of the Red Army. Between 1943–44, Evangelicals donated considerable amounts of money to the military and support of disabled soldiers – members of families of Christians (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 52-62).

After World War II, the state no longer needed the help of Evangelicals. Therefore, their role in the victory over Nazism was diminished (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 62-64). Their participation in the common cause was almost never mentioned in the press. In spite of this attitude from the Soviet State, members of Evangelical churches continued to serve in the military (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 113). AUCECB encouraged them to do so. In AUCECB churches, young people had 'send off parties' for military conscripts, during which they admonished the young soldiers to hold to biblical values and stay faithful to Christ.

Although members of unregistered CCECB churches opposed the atheistic state and its practices of persecution of believers, their young men could not avoid the compulsory

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<sup>58</sup> Dr. Walter Sawatsky provides an excellent review of the attitude of Soviet Evangelicals toward the concept of *Rodina* (Motherland) and military service. See SAWATSKY, W. 1981. *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II*, Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press.

military service. Many Russian Protestants who were called to military service could be identified as conscientious objectors. A number of Baptist young men refused to pledge allegiance to the Soviet State and bear arms. Because of this, they were exposed to mocking, harassment and severe persecution from their peers as well as from *Zampolity* (Officers responsible for political education of conscripts). Many were sent to *Stroybaty* (Special Military Construction Battalions) (Sawatsky, 1981). Sawatsky remarked, 'Since 1976 the Council of Prisoners Relatives (CPR), began to treat those Evangelical young men that refused to serve in the military as "prisoners of conscience". The list compiled by CPR, included thirteen names' (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 115).

The Moldovian soldier, Ivan Moyiseev (1952–1972), was beaten to death in the Crimea while serving in the military (Klippenstein, 2003). He was tortured for his faith and then, while still alive, drowned in the Black Sea. His story became well known because his death received some publicity in the West.

At the end of the 1970s, the Soviet Union entered a period of stagnation as Leonid Brezhnev's eighteen-year rule over the country was coming to its end. With the exception of Moscow and the major cities, the Soviet economy showed signs of crisis. Ideologically on the personal level things were not looking up. In many instances, instructors of atheism were doing their job more out of obligation than out of conviction including in the military. Soviet citizens that managed to travel abroad under strict KGB surveillance came back reporting of the wonders of life in the West and the abundance of consumer goods that were scarce in the U.S.S.R. (Tompson, 2003, p. 111).

In spite of some setbacks, the state atheistic machine was still powerful and influential. Evangelical youth, together with other high school students, went through the Elementary Military Preparation Course (Rus. *Kurs nachal'noy voennoy podgotovki*) that was obligatory for everyone in Soviet public schools (Kutepov, 2010, pp. 53-54). The state did everything to convince the young people that serving in the military was a noble thing because one was called to 'defend his motherland.' During the Cold War, young men were encouraged to be strong and ready to stand up to the West in case of a nuclear conflict (Kutepov, 2010, pp. 53-55). At the age of sixteen, boys were required to have physical examinations at the local office of the Military Commissioner (Rus. *Voennyyi komissariat*). At 18, they were called to active military duty. Exceptions to this were those young men who were studying in the *Instituty* (Institutes) and universities.

Rarely did AUCECB churches discourage their younger members from serving in the military (Prokhorov, 2013, p. 263). Most church leaders themselves served in the Soviet Army, and the compulsory military service by the 1980s seemed to be just another step in

one's life education. Military service was seen as a test of one's faith because believers serving in the army had to prove their faith with their actions and withstand temptations to give in to atheism under various kinds of threats. It was widely considered among AUCECB believers that after passing such a test, one was ready for baptism and a life-long commitment to God and the Church (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 115-120).

Churches became so used to the environment of persecution that they lost track of the state's methods to diminish the influence of Evangelicals in society. By 1991, it was so common for Evangelical men to have served in the military that those men that could not serve because of health reasons, were 'politely mocked' by those that served in the army. Military service was seen among AUCECB churchmen as an unavoidable and integral part of growth and development of any young man. By serving in the military, many young men felt like they had become a part of one big machine, which was called 'the Soviet state'. Though there are no firm statistics, some of the Evangelical young men were able to sustain atheistic pressure during the military service,<sup>59</sup> while others succumbed to it and never returned to churches (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 115-116).

Many of the Evangelicals were concerned about war in Afganistan and the possibility of killing people there as part of the duty. There were even special prayers for the young people not to be sent to Afganistan. Thompson, who studied the phenomenon of the collapse of the Soviet state, was of the opinion that the war in Afghanistan (1979–1989) contributed to the disillusionment of Soviet citizens with the Soviet Army and the state at large (Tompson, 2003, p. 57). By 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev succeeded Konstantin Chernenko as General Secretary of the CPSU, the disillusionment with the economic situation in the U.S.S.R., and particularly with the state of affairs in Afghanistan began to grow rapidly. Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov (1921–1989) was particularly vocal, voicing his protests against the Soviet military doctrine and involvement in the Afghan war (Bonner, 2011).

The more 'Black Tulip' (Rus. *Chyornyi tyul'pan*) planes flew back to the U.S.S.R. from Afghanistan carrying dozens of bodies of Soviet soldiers (including bodies of believers that served in the military at the time), the more Soviet citizens were convinced of the lack of necessity of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. The death toll of Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan was rising to 10,000.

With the economic crisis looming and improving relations with the United States, on 15 February 1989 Gorbachev ordered a withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan (Service,

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<sup>59</sup> The story of Ivan Moyiseev is the best-known example of a believer who did not succumb to pressure endured while he served in the Soviet Army. See *Ivan Moyiseev (1952 - 1972)* [Online]. Istselyon. Available: <http://www.iscelen.org/317-ivan-moiseev1952-1972.html> [Accessed January 21 2011].

2009a, p. 443). By that time, the death toll in the Soviet military rose to more than 13,000 soldiers with close to 50,000 injured (2009a).

Gorbachev's policies of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* fostered open discussion about the past, including revelations about Stalin's purges (Rus. *Chistki*) of the 1930s. Brzezinski pointed out the areas of Soviet life that came to light during the period of *Perestroika*: (1) The launching of the GULAG in the early 1920s, including the decimation of the pre-revolutionary elite and its large-scale exodus from Russia; (2) industrialization and collectivization drives of the early and mid-1930s, which generated massive famines and millions of deaths in the Ukraine and Kazakhstan; (3) the Great Purges and Terror of the mid-late 1930s, with millions incarcerated in labour camps and upward of one million shot and several million dying from maltreatment; (4) World War II of 1941–1945, with its multiple millions of military and civilian casualties and vast economic devastation; (5) resumption of Stalinist terror in the late 1940s, large-scale arrests and frequent executions; (6) the forty-year-long arms race with the United States, lasting from the late 1940s to the late 1980s, with its socially impoverishing effects; (7) the economically exhausting efforts to project Soviet power into the Caribbean, Middle East, and Africa during the 1970s and 1980s; (8) the debilitating war in Afghanistan from 1979–1989 (Brzezinski, 1997, pp. 90–91).

The role of the military was re-evaluated by Soviet society, following new information of the Soviet Army's involvement in putting down the anti-Communist uprisings in Hungary in 1956 (Turlac, 2009), Czechoslovakia in 1968 ('Prague Spring'), and Poland in 1981 (Kreis, 2004). For many Soviets, military service no longer represented an honour, but rather a burden and identification with the system in which they lost faith (Turlac, 1992, p. 8).

The role of the military in crushing popular uprisings in Tbilisi (Georgian S.S.R.) in 1989 and Vilnius (Lithuanian S.S.R.) in 1991 and its subsequent role in supporting the anti-Gorbachev coup of 1991 further contributed to the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., which formally took place in December 1991 (2008).

The Soviet Army disintegrated together with the unexpected collapse of the U.S.S.R. Brzezinski wrote, 'The collapse of the Soviet Union produced monumental geopolitical confusion. In the course of a mere fortnight, Russians suddenly discovered they no longer were the masters of a transcontinental empire' (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 88).

It took time for the newly formed countries – former Soviet republics – to form their own military structures. In the meantime, in the midst of post-Soviet economic and political chaos (Elliott, 1997), Evangelical young people received freedoms they never experienced before. In Moldova, for example, young men who were born after 1975 were not drafted into the army at all because of political chaos and uncertainty. Many members of Evangelical

churches were able to opt out of military service for religious reasons by presenting written letters signed by the pastor and the church committee.

Reflecting on the situation in Eurasia after the collapse of the U.S.S.R., Brzezinski wrote, 'The collapse of the Russian Empire created a power void in the very heart of Eurasia. Not only was there weakness and confusion in the newly independent states, but in Russia itself. The upheaval produced a massive systemic crisis' (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 89).

Chaos in regard to military service and conscientious objection reigned pretty much through the 1990s until Putin came to power. Katy Stinger and Mark Elliott wrote in the 2003 article published in the *East-West Church and Ministry Report*:

At present, chaos reigns in government policy towards conscientious objectors. The 1993 Constitution provides for 'alternative civil service' for COs. However, most courts have tried and sentenced objectors to prison in the absence of consistent implementing legislation. On the other hand, War Resisters' International reports that 'some individual judges have decided to use the provisions of the constitution directly and dismiss criminal charges brought against COs.' In 1996, the Russian Supreme Court ruled that 'refusal to perform military service for religious convictions does not constitute a crime'. But also in the 1990s, lower courts sentenced at least 700 COs to two years' imprisonment for refusal to bear arms. Most COs come from large cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg where NGOs such as Soldiers' Mothers and the Antimilitaristic Radical Association counsel conscripts and offer legal support in a climate of growing weariness of the war in Chechnya. WRI reports that in some cases, COs have been permitted to serve in unarmed military units even though, in the absence of implementing legislation, this is not an actual right. COs assigned to construction battalions find themselves serving alternative service under especially brutal conditions in units often led by persons with criminal records (Katy Morrow Stigers, 2003).

In the 1990s, in some churches that were led by ministers from the younger generation, the attitude toward military service changed dramatically. Military service was viewed as a form of one's identity with the state, which no longer represented any value to Evangelicals. The state was identified with the Soviet past, and believers were not eager to join the newly formed military structures in the former Soviet republics. Rising nationalism contributed its share toward the refusal of Christian young people to serve in the military.

In other churches, led by ministers from the post-World War II generation, service in the military in the 1990s continued to some extent to be seen as an important step in the 'school of life and faith'. Experiential rather than academic understanding of Christian faith coupled together with the 'Theology of Suffering' from the Soviet era still moved some church leaders to recommend to Evangelical young men to join the military.

When interviewed on 25 August 2007, Victor Levashov, RUECB Senior Presbyter for Northern Caucasus, offered the following rationale in support of service in the military: 'I teach the young men that it is wonderful to serve in the military and hold a weapon. I think that when our young men begin to adhere to a practice of avoiding military service, this sends a message to people that Evangelical believers are unpatriotic.'

When interviewed on 7 March 2006, Victor Loginov observed:

Many of the young men opted to skip military service because they saw all the disorder and abuse that existed there. Parents were afraid to send their boys to the military. Many opted for the alternative military service. In addition, young people had poor health, which prevented them from serving in the military. Because of corruption, it was easy to pay a doctor and get a document that indicated that you had 'one hundred diseases', so to speak.

The unsuccessful First Chechen War (1994–1996) which resulted in heavy military casualties (4,103 killed and 19,794 wounded) and the unrest in the Caucasus region (Shmakova, 2009) contributed to the refusal of Evangelical members to serve in the military. A decline in morale in the military and an increase in cases of abuse of soldiers further discouraged service (Rus. *Dedovshchina*).

It is doubtful that Evangelical churches in the 1990s had a unified position on military service. Though Yuri Sipko, the former President of the RUECB, acknowledged that there were Evangelical believers that held to the opinion that a Christian should not serve in the military, he, nevertheless stated, 'Our young men are drafted and continue to serve in the Russian military' (Sipko, 2007). Sipko's stance on the issue of military service is somewhat controversial. On one hand, he actively criticized the Russian authorities for the injustice, corruption and chaos that exist within the state organizations (Sipko, 2012), yet, on the other hand, he appeared to uphold the position that young men are to defend their own motherland and, therefore, serve in the military. This contributed to the confusion Russian Evangelicals had about loyalty to the Russian state. Dr. Sergienko observed:

As citizens of their own country, Evangelicals to a degree felt like they were strangers among their own people. This is why they gradually came to regard strangers as more of their own. Believers thought that if 'strangers' stood against the 'Evil Empire', this means that they wholeheartedly support them (Sergienko, 2011).

In 1993, the new Russian constitution stipulated the right of a citizen to an 'Alternative Military Service'. Yet, for some time there was no law regulating the right of Russian citizens to substitute service in military for 'Alternative Service.' This led to confusion and gave Evangelical church members a reason to refuse to serve in the military. Sawatsky supported the view that Evangelicals, especially in parts of the Ukraine and Central Asian countries, former republics of the U.S.S.R., strictly held to pacifist views (Sawatsky, 2011).

It is likely that the absence of any mention of 'Alternative Service' in the legislation of newly emerged independent countries; namely, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan caused serious problems for Evangelical believers that held pacifist views (Katy Morrow Stigers, 2003).

In the 1990s, recognizing the right of believers not to serve in the military, several former Soviet republics, Moldova, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, introduced the Alternative Service law into their respective legislation. The West recognized this as progress



toward the establishment of democracy in these countries. Since then, hundreds of young Evangelical believers applied to the 'Alternative Service' programme.

#### **4.7 Evangelical Emigration of 1980s – 1990s as a Result of Soviet State Persecutions of the Church**

Evangelical emigration did not originate in the 1980s or 1990s. When interviewed on 10 June 1999, Peter Zhushma, an Evangelical emigrant from Pinsk, Belorussia, indicated, 'Even in the 1970s, AUCECB believers and Pentecostals petitioned the Soviet government to allow them to emigrate to any non-Communist country. Many considered going to Israel because of a widespread belief in Christ's return to the holy city of Jerusalem.' In spite of multiple efforts of Evangelicals to leave the Soviet Union, a decisive breakthrough occurred only in the late 1980s. The success is tied to Soviet dissident and Pentecostal Christian, Boris Perchatkin, who was asked to present a report on the plight of believers in the Soviet Union. Perchatkin stated:

For us, Christians, emigration was not an end goal but rather a weapon of battling the Soviet system. We wanted to change something in the country. By 1980, we already had 30,000 believers that petitioned the government to emigrate. In 1987, the U.S. Congress asked me to write a report on conditions of Evangelicals in the Soviet Union, which I did. Because of this, I was placed under house arrest. But I made it to America anyway. Because of this report, the U.S. Congress enacted a law, that in 1988 opened doors of 'religious emigration' for Soviet Evangelicals (Perchatkin, 2008).

According to the statistical data provided by the Russian Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals), the numbers of emigrants to America from Pentecostal churches between 1989 and 1995 were as high as 25,000 (Ryakhovskiy, 2013). Vitaly Futorny, Slavic journalist from California, estimated the total number of Russian-speaking people that came to America in 1990s – 2000 to reach 500,000 (Futorny, 2013).

According to Lev Simkin, by 1979, the number of petitions for emigration from Soviet Pentecostals alone reached 20,000 (Simkin, 2012, p. 135). The most well-known instance of Evangelical emigration is the case of the 'Siberian Seven' (Pollock, 1980), seven Pentecostals<sup>60</sup> (Chmykhalov and Vashchenko families) that spent years in the basement of the American Embassy in Moscow (1981) fearing retribution from the Soviet police for petitioning to emigrate to the West (1982). Thousands of other Evangelicals, for instance, unregistered Pentecostals, also desired to emigrate to the West (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 289–290).<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The plight of the seven Siberian Pentecostals is well described by John Pollock (1980).

<sup>61</sup> Dr. Walter Sawatsky is one of the top experts on religious life in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States. He serves as Professor of Church History, Mission, and Director of

The conditions of existence for CCECB churches became so difficult that the ability to survive was questionable. Not only did moderates return to AUCECB churches in Siberia, Northern Kazakhstan, and the Baltic region but also many of the key leaders emigrated to West Germany before realizing state policy made it easier for leaders to emigrate (Sawatsky, 1981).

The wave of the Russian-Ukrainian Evangelical emigration to the West began in the 1980s and extended into the 2000s because quite a few churches had large extended families with strong ties to each other. Thus, with the emigration of one family unit it was common for the rest of relatives to emigrate to the West.

Gennady Sergienko characterized the new exodus of hundreds of thousands of believers from the former Soviet Union in the 1990s to be 'the fulfilment of a long-time dream to get away from totalitarian oppression and receive freedom of worship that would not be restricted in any way' (Sergienko, 2004). Evangelicals, who were branded as 'fanatics', longed to have a normal life that they have been deprived of (Kuzin, 1970, p. 5). The phenomenon of Slavic Evangelical emigration can be theologically linked to the theme of the Promised Land. While life in the Soviet Union was compared to the wandering of Israel in the desert for forty years, the West was portrayed as the 'Promised Land', where God was leading his people. (Valuisky, 2000, p. 10) Evangelical preaching and hymnody identified the life of believers in the Soviet Union with such metaphors as 'spiritual desert,' (*Dukhovnaya pustynya*) 'valley of sorrows,' (*Dolina skorbey*) and 'darkness of unbelief' (*T'ma never'a*). Hope, therefore, was tied to the imagery of the Promised Land, which Old Testament Israelites reached after wandering in the desert for forty years. Evangelical preachers often encouraged believers to persevere and not lose heart until 'we all reach the land of milk and honey.' With the doors of freedom gradually opening in the end of 1980s, the image of the Promised Land was easily adapted to the reality of emigration to America and other Western nations. The Russian theologian, Constantine Prokhorov wrote:

The logical development, for some Baptists (ultimately for many), of the search for the 'promised land,' was Baptist emigration abroad. With some softening of the Soviet regime's attitude regarding emigration, the desire to go abroad was increasingly evident among many Baptists. They found certain verses from the Bible (usually from the Old Testament), which they used to justify their decision (Prokhorov, 2013, pp. 389-390).

There are several reasons for the mass exodus of Evangelicals to the West in the 1980s–1990s. First, it is important to point out that the Soviet empire was on the verge of collapse

(Soros, 1990). The Soviet system was no longer functional as its leader, Gorbachev, pushed for change and the CPSU *apparatchiks* resisted his new initiatives (Tudorancea, 2010). Rotaru said in 19 April 2009 interview, ‘...thousands of believers no longer felt any loyalty to a country that no longer existed.’ This fact served as a rationale for Evangelical emigration to the West.

As Gorbachev-inspired reforms<sup>62</sup> led to more openness and discussion about Soviet history of persecutions of Christians, it became evident that the ruling Communist Party had done everything over nearly seventy years of the existence of the U.S.S.R. to destroy the Church. In his book *On My Country and the World*, Mikhail Gorbachev acknowledged the cruelty of the totalitarian system in the Soviet Union, ‘My view is that in the Soviet Union a harsh and even cruel totalitarian system triumphed. It underwent an evolution to be sure; after Stalin’s death its harshness and cruelty were modified and blunted somewhat, but in essence it remained the same’ (Gorbachev, 2000, p. 15).

The relaxation of censorship resulted in the CPSU losing its grip on the media. The media began to expose severe social and economic problems, which the Soviet government had long denied and covered up. The positive view of Soviet life, which had been presented to the public by the official media, was quickly uncovered, and the negative aspects of life in the Soviet Union were brought into the spotlight. This began to undermine public faith in the Soviet system (Tudorancea, 2010).

Many restrictions rigidly imposed upon Soviet citizens in the 1960s–1970s were relaxed. Increasing corruption among the bureaucrats enabled thousands of Soviets to obtain travel passports for an extra fee and without considerable difficulties. This situation enabled many Soviet Evangelical believers to hope for an easier-than-before emigration to the West.

Second, by the end of the 1980s, Evangelical churches in the Soviet Union had been through years of persecution, which weakened their ability to exist in Soviet society. When interviewed on 13 April 2007, Leonid Kartavenko of RUECB indicated, ‘Baptists were totally separated from society, so to speak. They were pushed out of public life in the Soviet Union.’ Christians no longer felt a part of society because they were marginalized and mistreated. Once the ‘prison doors opened wide’, prisoners wanted to escape. Alexander Valuiskey wrote that many Russian Evangelicals did not feel at home in their own country. They shared the

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<sup>62</sup> The term indicates Mikhail Gorbachev’s aspirations to revive the Soviet economy after the stagnation of Brezhnev’s years (1964–1982). *Perestroika* (literally ‘restructuring’) mainly dealt with offering more freedom and economic incentive to individuals who were encouraged to start cooperatives. *Glasnost* (literally ‘openness’) was seen by Gorbachev as the way of people’s participation in country’s affairs and ability to openly speak about existing questions and problems in the political, social and economic spheres.

image of 'suffering witnesses of Christ in the Communist environment, aliens, and strangers in society' (Valuisky, 2000, pp. 9–10).

Third, in spite of the coming religious freedom in the U.S.S.R., Soviet Evangelicals began to feel they were the marginalized minority. The entire nation turned to Russian Orthodoxy for answers to its spiritual thirst. The myth that Evangelical believers were 'bourgeois agents sent from the West' did not disappear with the collapse of the Soviet Union, but was transformed into Evangelicals being a 'foreign sect' that threatened to undermine historical Russian Orthodox belief. Russian society held to a stereotype that 'all true Russians must be Orthodox Christians.' Ordinary Russians typically regarded Evangelicals as representatives of a 'Western faith' (Valuisky, 2000, pp. 9–10). Anti-Evangelical sentiments in Russia were bound to grow with Putin's coming to power in 1999 and the strengthening of Russian nationalism and anti-Americanism.

In spite of existing pessimistic notes within the Evangelical community, some ministers did everything possible to attract spiritually thirsty people into their churches. The end of the 1980s–1990s saw tremendous efforts being devoted to mass evangelism and the construction of church buildings often with the help from the West. Yet, it has to be noted that these efforts did not bring desired results. Thousands of people who made professions of faith at the stadiums and other public arenas did not make it to churches. They did not view a profession of faith as an invitation to daily spiritual life with God but as a confession of sin in the Russian Orthodox meaning of the term. Pastors from central Russia made numerous efforts to attract people to their churches through building projects and various social ministries. All was in vain. Some came to the conclusion that Russians do not go to church. They were weary and decided to emigrate. Valuisky concludes that 'it is a genuine reason for some, but for others it may be an excuse to leave' (Valuisky, 2000, pp. 9–10). When interviewed on 13 April 2007, Kartavenko stated, that "“backward thinking” and “old ecclesiological paradigms” were to blame for poor connection between the “stadium evangelism” and a path to the local church.'

Fourth, as the Soviet Union neared its collapse, its political life headed into uncertainty. The CPSU no longer held a leading role in the political life of the country. Low prices on oil in 1980 contributed to the government's failure to meet its goals for annual revenue, which led to a collapse of social and economic programmes.

People were tired of food shortages experienced during the years of collectivization in the 1920s, immediately after World War II (late 1940s) and during Khrushchev years (1960s). When Gorbachev's government introduced food and clothing rationing in the late 1980s, many Evangelical believers set their sights upon the West. They considered life in the West

prosperous and abundant compared to what was available in the U.S.S.R. Maxim Maximov, a well known preacher on CIS television and founder of the New Life Channel (CNL) that broadcasts out of Almaty, Kazakhstan, coined a new term *Kolbasnaya emigratsiya* ('Sausage emigration'). The term underlined the idea that Slavic Evangelicals were coming to the West in search of sausage, which was in short supply in the Soviet Union (Patz, 2013).

The construction of new housing in the U.S.S.R. for the working class virtually stopped. The country no longer carried the burden of supporting the army, the largest in the world. Crime rose. Laws passed during Soviet times were out-dated and new ones were not being passed on time. This created a legal vacuum, which bred all kinds of illegal activities in the economy and created a huge 'black market'.

Because of the collapse of centralized economic planning and various republics (especially Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia), advocating independence, the production lines at industrial complexes in different parts of the country stopped. This led to crisis in the consumer goods industry and food shortages. Millions of workers were not paid for months, which led to social unrest. Gorbachev's popularity within the Soviet Union dropped dramatically.

When interviewed on 16 January 2007, Sergey Savinsky stated:

Collapse of the U.S.S.R. was both good and bad. Good because there was no more pressure from Moscow. Every new country that appeared had a different approach, and bad because such a gigantic state that had existed for nearly a century collapsed. It was a crime to allow such an enormous state to disintegrate.

According to Kartavenko (interviewed on 13 April 2007), 'for many Evangelical believers in the face of economic disaster, the West represented "the Promised Land", where they desired to emigrate.' According to Reverend Savinsky (interviewed on 16 January 2007):

The Evangelical emigration to the West took place mostly for material reasons. Instead of reaching out to society at the time of freedom, believers placed their hope in the material values the West had to offer. Moreover, the fact that Evangelical emigrants were not interested in outreach is evident in the fact that Slavic emigrant churches grew only because of procreation and not active evangelism.

Evangelicals of the 1990s had to deal with the new geo-political reality (Yekelchik, 2007, p. 193). Fifteen independent republics appeared in place of one gigantic country. The rise of nationalism in the Baltic republics (Kasekamp, 2010, pp. 165-166), Republic of Georgia and Moldova (where the elite held pro-Romanian aspirations), (Panici, 2003), ethnic conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorny Karabakh, and unrest in the Fergana Valley, spreading across Eastern Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, prompted thousands of Evangelical believers to think about emigrating.

In Moldova, the rise of nationalism was evident among Evangelical believers. They demanded from the leadership of the Central Baptist Church in Kishinev the formation of an

independent Romanian-speaking congregation (Turlac, 2008, p. 244). Some believers were quite active in the movement called the People's Front of Moldova (Rom. *Frontul Popular a Moldovei*) that advocated decommunization of Moldova and unification (*Unirea*) of the country with neighbouring Romania.

A few Evangelical believers were perplexed over the collapse of the unified structure of AUCECB<sup>63</sup> and the formation of Evangelical unions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and other former Soviet republics. According to Savinsky, interviewed on 16 January 2007, 'Connections between Evangelical believers from different republics were broken. Different unions had different approaches to Christian work.' It was with regret that the 1992 Moscow Congress of the AUCECB acknowledged the fact of disintegration of the Union. Dr. Sawatsky wrote:

The forced union of Evangelical Christians, Baptists, Pentecostals and later Mennonites to form the legally recognised All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian-Baptists (AUCECB), had by 1988 resulted in the fusion of the first two and the departure of Pentecostals and Mennonites into their own structures. Thus in Russian shorthand, what outsiders lumped under 'Baptist', the insiders regularly referred to as ECB. All-Union structure needed restructuring after 1990. They organised a Euro-Asiatic Federation of ECB Unions and envisioned a rotating leadership to avoid national preferences. But the structure, as I have discussed more extensively elsewhere, lacked budget and authority. In effect, the national unions struggled to survive; some are still struggling (Sawatsky, 2007, pp. 25-26).

When interviewed on 19 April 2009, the Moldovian pastor, Ion Rotaru, indicated, 'Russian-speaking Evangelical believers emigrated from Moldova to America because of fear of unification of the country with Romania. It was evident that Moldova could not have survived as an independent country.'

The increasing Islamization<sup>64</sup> of Central Asian countries became a concern for Evangelicals who did not want to experience another wave of persecution. According to Insur Shamgunov, Strategic Consultant at Gallup and former President of Eurasian College, the number of mosques in the Central Asian region increased from 300 in 1990 to more than 10,000 in 2000 (Shamgunov, 2009, p. 11). In 1992, ethnic Germans accounted for 4.7 percent of the population of Kazakhstan and 2.4 percent in Kyrgyzstan (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 127).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> In 1992, when Euro-Asian Federation of Unions of Evangelical Christians-Baptists replaced AUCECB, Dr. Grigoriy Ivanovich Komendant, President of the Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Associations, became its first president.

<sup>64</sup> 'Islamization' is the process of a society's conversion to the religion of Islam. In contemporary usage, it refers to the perceived imposition of an Islamist social and political system on a society with an indigenously different social and political background.

<sup>65</sup> Dr. Insur Shamgunov (2009) offers an extensive study of the Church in Central Asia before and after 1917.

Between 1991 and 2007, almost half of the Slavic population left Kyrgyzstan (Shamgunov, 2009, pp. 11-12).<sup>66</sup>

The population of Baltic republics often expressed anti-Russian and anti-Soviet sentiments after the World War II and during Khrushchev and Brezhnev times. Soviet authorities used a 'stick and carrot' policy toward the newly acquired republics. Andres Kasekamp wrote, 'Armed conflict did not cease in the Baltic states with the end of World War II. Fighting against the Soviet occupation forces continued in the forests and swamps. In Lithuania [alone], an estimated 50,000 men and women participated in the flight against the Soviet regime' (Kasekamp, 2010, p. 141).

People of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia looked at Russians as occupiers and were usually hostile toward the Soviet regime. The Baltic countries were the first to declare their independence during the time of *Perestroika* (1985–1991) (Khiterer, 2004). The government of the Soviet Union accepted the fact on 6 September 1991 (Kasekamp, 2010, p. 171).

Social upheavals served as one more reason why Soviet Evangelicals wanted to emigrate. Many had large families and elderly parents, whom they no longer were able to support. Evangelical believers saw the West as a place for religious, but also, socio-economic refuge. Several key factors contributed to the consideration of Slavic Evangelical emigration: economics, crime and security, politics, socio-cultural factors, religious alienation, and apocalyptic theology. Low salaries, high prices, and dramatic unemployment rates also contributed to the flight abroad (Valuisky, 2000, pp. 9–10).

The fifth reason for emigration should be sought in theological interpretations of biblical texts. The 1980s–1990s saw new interpretations that often had an eschatological and apocalyptic flavour come into the churches. For some, emigration was a God-given opportunity. Increasingly, Bible prophecies figured in motivations for Russian Evangelical emigration.<sup>67</sup> Under persecution, Evangelicals speculated that Russia's future was foretold in the book of Revelation, in part due to some Western teaching that viewed Russia as the 'beast' of chapter thirteen, and the CPSU as the 'prostitute' of chapter 17. As the leaders of the U.S.S.R. were in battle with the people of God, many images from the book of Revelation were interpreted in light of recent Russian history. When Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin overthrew the CPSU leadership, Christians feared this was only a temporary

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<sup>66</sup> For example, in 2008, the Kant Baptist Church located in a suburb of the capital city of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, had an average attendance of about forty people for Sunday worship service while the sanctuary can easily accommodate five hundred people.

<sup>67</sup> Prophecies about God moving 'His people' to North America were especially prevalent among unregistered Pentecostals in Ukraine and Belarus.

change. Evangelical apocalyptic sentiments were, and still are, widespread, especially among Pentecostals.

When interviewed on 13 April 2007, Kartavenko offered criticism of ministers, who, according to him, 'were artificially inflating the eschatological expectations among believers' to justify their own emigration to the West:

Prior to the 1990s, Evangelical ministers preached about the survival of the Church. During the 1990s, there was a rise of eschatological expectations fuelled by sermons about the shortness of time and the closing door to the 'arc of salvation.' They were actively spreading this kind of teaching. They thought that God had already accomplished His mission for the Church in the former U.S.S.R., and now is the time to wait. I would say that the 1990s were a time of a 'mass run away' of believers.

The United States of America became the major destination of Evangelical emigrants. They filled already existing Slavic churches and formed new ones. Numbers of Slavic Evangelical believers in California grew significantly. For example, in 1988, the First Slavic Baptist Church of Sacramento, California consisted of 18 members. By 2012, it had grown to more than 1,200. As of October 2012, Second Slavic Baptist Church of Sacramento, numbered close to 1,000 members (Bugriyev, 2012, p. 1).

With Sacramento, California being the Slavic 'Mecca,' large churches of Slavic Evangelicals also existed in the following cities: Denver (Colorado), Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), Minneapolis (Minnesota), Vancouver (Washington), Charlotte, (North Carolina) and Spartanburg (South Carolina).

Other emigrants chose to settle in Canada<sup>68</sup> and Australia. In 1992, Evangelicals from Transnistrian region of Moldova and Odesskaya Oblast' of Ukraine were able to obtain Cuban visas and boarded planes headed from Moscow to Havana, Cuba. Once the aircraft landed for refuelling in Canada, they surrendered to Canadian authorities. After several years of wait, they were granted Green Cards. Up to 100 of them are now settled in St. Catharines, Ontario, where they formed a Slavic Baptist Church (Alexandrov, 2012, p. 4).

Evangelicals of German background, including the Mennonites in Central Asia who were a part of AUCECB, naturally preferred emigration to Germany. A small number of Evangelicals of Jewish (and not only) origin settled in Israel<sup>69</sup>, where they formed ethnic churches that preserved Russian as the language of worship. Some of them later emigrated to North America.

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<sup>68</sup> Slavic Christian emigrants in Canada struggled to find Russian-speaking churches in a number of provinces. Less than 10 churches belong to the Slavic Evangelical Baptist Union in Canada. Evangelicals settled mostly in St. Catharines, Toronto, Hamilton, London, Winnipeg and Montreal. The Slavic Baptist Church in St. Catharines pastored by Reverend Pavel Alexandrov, numbers close to 150 members.

<sup>69</sup> The author of the thesis personally knows several families of non-Jewish origin (Seryapovs and Tsuryaks) that emigrated from Kishinev, Moldavia in the early 1990s and settled in Israel.



New emigrants had no idea what awaited them in the West and were unprepared for Western life. Two major issues had to be dealt with: (1) the adaptation to living in the conditions of a free-market economy and (2) learning English, which for many became a 'lifeline' and means for finding decent employment. Sergienko noticed that most emigrants did not anticipate the consequences of coming in touch with American culture. The negative consequences of life behind the 'Iron Curtain' still influenced Soviet Evangelicals' naïve view of the outside world (Sergienko, 2004, p. 19).

Slavic emigrant churches preferred to cater to the tastes of their members, thus concentrating upon the preservation of ethnic cultural features rather than integrating into American society. Vyacheslav Tsvirin'ko noted:

Ethnic churches are attractive to their members because they preserve the language and traditions of the country (or countries) where emigrants come from. This factor creates a barrier for interaction of emigrants with Americans born in the United States, for they choose to attend churches where they would not be considered a minority (Tsvirin'ko, 2013, p. 41).

Emigration caused a generational rift between 'the fathers and the sons' after a well-known novel by Ivan Turgenev (Turgenev, 1998). One of the key issues Slavic Evangelical churches began to battle with in the 1990s was: (1) What does it mean to be a Christian? (2) Does it mean that one should stand firm upon the principles of the Bible or does it also mean that one has to belong to the Slavic culture, speak Russian, and stay close to the Slavic community?

According to Tsvirin'ko, the 'continuous use of Russian language remains one of the most powerful barriers between generations of Slavic emigrants.' In 2004, 59 percent of Slavic young people that attended Slavic Evangelical churches belonging to the Slavic Pacific Baptist Association (mostly in California) were in favour of introduction of the English-language sermon into the worship service. By 2010, the numbers grew to 89 percent (Tsvirin'ko, 2013, p. 44).

For teenagers and young adults who emigrated to the West with their parents, America and other countries became more of a home than to their parents. They quickly learned English, entered schools, colleges and universities. Exposure to the realities of life in American Baptist (and other) churches required adjustment where emphasis was placed more on the principles of the Bible and inner values of a Christian than the heavily emphasized outward appearance of Slavic emigrant churches (Turlac, 2012).

Parents and children, thus, had great difficulty in understanding one another. For parents, the essence of the Gospel was in regular church attendance, conformity to Slavic culture, observance of the dress code, and unquestionable obedience of church rules. For them

holiness meant separation from the world in a sense of detachment from the Western culture, in which they lived. Turlac wrote:

Children are the cause of a headache for their Slavic parents. On one hand, it can be said that a quite a few children from Evangelical families attend Slavic churches together with their parents. On the other hand, parents came to realise that children spend five days per week in an English-language environment (at school and while hanging out with their American friends). Children experience a direct influence of American way of life and culture. They speak English quite well, which sets them apart from the older generation. Even in Slavic churches in America, younger children sing and recite poems in English (Turlac, 2012).

Taras Dyatlik, Director of Educational Development of Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (Rivne, Ukraine), compared the ‘fathers’ and the ‘sons’ by using a biblical metaphor of Exodus. He wrote:

Fathers concentrated their attention more on preservation of forms of worship. They wanted to keep music styles the same. They wanted to preserve traditions of Slavic Evangelical brotherhood, not realising that Exodus is a catalyst of change. It forces people to change forms, styles and traditions. Nevertheless, God and Christian faith remain the same (Dyatlik, 2013, p. 1).

Under Western influence, the younger generation of emigrants looked for the meaning of the Gospel in a daily personal relationship with Christ and biblical answers to the problems and challenges faced on a daily basis. Even today, many cannot find answers in Slavic emigrant churches.

The leadership of Slavic churches expressed concern about the younger generation’s aspirations to frequent English-speaking churches and to dress like their American peers. There was also great concern over the preservation of the Russian language as the only language used during worship (Turlac, 2012). A young Russian/Ukrainian emigrant to the United States wrote, ‘I moved away from a church that was strictly for members of traditional Slavic culture because I wanted more inclusiveness. I wanted a place to invite my co-workers and friends who spoke English, and had varying skin colours’ (Stasiyuk, 2013).

Vyacheslav Gladyshev, Chairman of the Missions Committee of the Pacific Slavic Baptist Association expressed concern over Slavic churches not reaching out toward unchurched Russians and Ukrainians as well as not being able to relate to their English-speaking neighbours. According to Gladyshev, in recent years churches in Sacramento baptized ‘less than 10 unchurched young people and zero native English speakers’ (Gladyshev, 2013).

Reverend Nikolai Gavrilov, a Slavic Evangelical minister from Brookhaven, Pennsylvania, pointed out that the young people chose entertainment over worship. They occupied themselves with browsing the Internet, attending sports events, and going on cruises. All this negates ministry before the Lord. Gavrilov stated: ‘It is quite common that some Baptist young men’s hair is too long, so that men no longer look like men. It is a fornication of the church’ (Gavrilov, 2010, p. 21).

Dr. Gennady Sergienko warned against extremist and fundamentalist views among Evangelical churches. He stated that the tendency of Evangelical church leaders to treat Christian women as second-class people is alarming. According to him, 'Slavic Christianity looks very much like Islamic fundamentalism. It seems that all we want to do is dress women in long black dresses and veils, thinking that this will be the ideal solution of the "women's issue" in the church (Sergienko, 2010).' Sergienko notes that if Evangelical emigrant communities desire to preserve the rich heritage of Christian faith, local churches should become cradles where 'the story' is told (Sergienko, 2004, p. 19).

Instead of stressing values and principles that all world Baptists had in common, namely, believer's baptism, autonomy of the local church, separation between the church and state, and the issue of religious freedom, Evangelical emigrants chose to focus on outward differences. These are unavoidable, given the multinational and multicultural face of the world Baptist movement.

Reverend Grigoriy Babere, Evangelical Slavic emigrant minister, who attended the Congress of the BWA in Hawaii in 2010, chose to criticize its participants from different parts of the world for the cultural expressions of their faith: 'Many participants danced on the stage. We think that our Evangelical brotherhood truly preserved the principles of the Gospel and the purity of the doctrine' (Babere, 2010, p. 25).

Most emigrants formed ethnic Russian or Ukrainian churches, led by pastors who emigrated from the U.S.S.R. in large numbers. An extensive wave of emigration often caused an 'oversupply' of ministers, which meant that some of them had to wait for weeks for their turn to preach from the pulpit. This situation led to conflicts between ministers, choir directors, musicians, and other talented believers used to leadership roles in their churches in the former U.S.S.R. Conflicts, in turn, led to splits and formation of new congregations in different parts of the United States of America.

Alexander Valuiskey, an emigrant himself, shared some observations of a worship service in one of the Russian emigrant Evangelical churches in America. According to him, 'Among worshippers were more than twenty former pastors that are not involved in any ministry. A couplet now circulates among Christians in Russia: "God opened the door for evangelization; Satan opened the door for emigration"' (Valuiskey, 2000, p. 9).

Since the authority of pastors was virtually unquestionable in churches, their emigration caused a chain reaction that prompted other church members to direct their thoughts to emigration to the West. One of the church members put it in the following words, 'If such a godly man as my pastor decided to emigrate, that means there is God's will in this, and perhaps we should follow his footsteps.'

Prokhorov indicated that the concept of 'God's will' played a significant role in justification of Slavic Evangelical emigration to the West:

Regardless of how [biblical] texts were used, Russian Baptists began to assert that they must carry out the 'will of God.' Even the most determined defenders of free will among Soviet Baptists allowed overtones of fatalism to enter their thinking: 'What can we do, if we are told from above to go there?' (Prokhorov, 2013, p. 390).

While many saw emigration as a great blessing from God, others in Evangelical churches voiced strong opposition to those emigrating to the West, particularly to the United States of America. In a letter addressed to Andreas Patz on 14 May 2010, the Slavic Evangelical immigrant, Anatoly Ivashchenko, wrote:

Pastor of our church in the Ukraine caused all kinds of trouble to those emigrating to the United States of America. I think that in the end of 1980s he still followed 'instructions' from the Soviet authorities. He stated, 'I am not going to pray for those leaving for America!' Sadly, later he emigrated to the United States of America and brought his whole family. For some reason, he does not remember things that he said in the past (Ivashchenko, 2010).

There are several reasons for opposition to Slavic emigration to the West. First, America was a long-time Soviet foe and enemy in the Cold War. Thus, many Christians, raised in the Soviet Union, unconsciously embraced Soviet propaganda aimed at the risk of American hegemony in the world.

Second, the opposition pointed to tremendous opportunities for evangelism and planting of new churches that were wide open with the collapse of the Soviet Union (Trubchik, 2013. According to Reverend Sergey Savinsky, interviewed on 16 January 2007:

They considered it to be unbiblical and unchristian to 'leave one's own flock' at this opportune and strategic time in the history of the country. Those that were emigrating to the West were seen as having changed their values and clinging more to the material wealth than spiritual priorities.

The opposition was primarily directed at long-time experienced ministers, deacons, choir directors, and talented musicians who were leaving by the dozens. Tens of thousands of Evangelicals from the former Soviet Union had arrived in the United States. During a period of five to six years, close to 20,000 Slavic emigrants settled in Sacramento, California, U.S.A. The migration of Evangelicals created a deficit of experienced leaders and lay people in Russia. In addition, emigration created a sense of uncertainty among those who chose to stay in Russia, who wondered who would be leaving next (Tsvirin'ko, 2000, p. 11).

Those who voiced opposition accused emigrants of materialism (Patz, 2013) and a refusal to spread the Kingdom of God. This accusation, though not embracing all emigrants, offered some ground for disagreements. Most Evangelical believers lived in near poverty during the Soviet years, therefore, their longing for a better life could be understood. When interviewed on 7 March 2006, Victor Loginov indicated:

Emigrants saw America as literally being 'heaven on earth'. When they arrived in America and saw that it was not exactly a 'paradise' where everything was free to enjoy, they still pulled their families and friends

into the 'emigration pot'. Evangelicals wanted to have financial and material security, which they lacked in the U.S.S.R.

Believers' feelings toward ministers emigrating to the West from the Chernovtsy Oblast' in Ukraine were such that if any pastor or deacon suddenly left for America, leaving behind his church, he was to be deprived of his ordination. When interviewed on 20 March 2006, Piotr Zeona stated, 'Ministers could no longer feed their families so it was easier to raise children in America.'

The Evangelical churchman, Vasiliy Davnyi, remembered a conversation between a church member and a minister from Moldova who was leaving his church for the West in 1992. The church member was asking his pastor, 'Why are you going to America and not to the opposite direction – to Russian Siberia, where millions have not heard about Christ' (Davnyi, p. 2).

Third, some Evangelicals saw emigration as producing a 'cleansing effect' in the Church (Sergienko, 2011). The rationale was that God was cleansing his Church of those who had chosen the riches of the world (meaning those who were emigrating to the West).

The 1990s saw a segment of Evangelicals from intelligentsia that did not find a place in churches (especially in larger ones) because of the oversaturation of ministers. Some came to Christ recently from the circles of the intelligentsia. Others could not use their talents because they were theologically educated in Russia, Ukraine, and in the West. Churches in the 1990s were still quite resentful toward the idea of having theologically educated pastors. Vladimir Solodovnikov<sup>70</sup>, a representative of the church intelligentsia, questioned the future of Evangelical intellectuals. According to Solodovnikov:

Churches did not need intelligent people. Knowledge and faith were often presented as opposites in the spectrum of church life. Churches were rejecting educated people. People always suspected them of being doctrinally wrong. There was a cult of 'simple folk' in Evangelical churches. Ninety percent of local churches were comprised of workers and peasants. Seventy or eighty percent were retired people (Solodovnikov, 2004).

In 13 April 2007 interview, Leonid Kartavenko<sup>71</sup> talked about the number of Evangelical believers that emigrated from Russia and cited reasons for leaving. According to him, 'there were two hundred thousand people; those from the regions with significant numbers of Evangelical believers who were experiencing crisis.' Kartavenko blamed the

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<sup>70</sup> Dr. Vladimir Solodovnikov is Professor of All-Russian Evangelical Christian Academy. He currently resides in Pskov, Russia. He is a historian by training (Ph.D.). In 1990s, Solodovnikov taught at Moscow Baptist Theological Seminary that belongs to the RUECB. He often criticizes the Russian Evangelical leadership for a lack of vision for the future of Evangelicals in the country.

<sup>71</sup> Reverend Leonid Kartavenko currently serves as Vice-President of All-Russian Commonwealth of Evangelical Christians (Rus. *VSEKh*) that makes a claim to trace its roots to Ivan S. Prokhanov's movement.

leadership of churches who did not welcome the intelligentsia and theologically educated young people, and did not entrust them with Christian ministry.

Victor Loginov (interviewed on 7 March 2006), represented a generation that was used to centralized leadership of AUCECB in Moscow. For such pastors, the collapse of the U.S.S.R. often meant significant changes to which they could not easily adapt. Loginov thought that the collapse of the Soviet Union had a negative effect upon churches and culture in general:

There was no longer any unified structure. The EAFECBU did not have a unifying effect. Believers used to have AUCECB President and General Secretary in Moscow. They were in charge of the governing body in the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Union's structure. There were problems then, but to say that the collapse of the U.S.S.R. produced something positive (maybe apart from freedom) was a big question (Loginov, 2006).

The strong connections to tradition and the resentment of new and pragmatic ideas, many of which came from the West, led the 'old guard' of Evangelical leaders to 'throw away the baby together with the baptismal water'. Victor Loginov became upset when someone used statistics and quantitative instruments in measuring church work. He could not imagine why Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* (Warren, 2002) was so popular among Christians today. He thought that Warren made some questionable statements that perplexed him. Warren's congregation chose rock music for their time of praise and worship, and then he said: 'We lost a few hundred people, but got thousands.' As Loginov stated, 'God looks for faithfulness and does not value success at all costs. Warren is not always in line with God's approach to things. He says things that God does not approve.'

When interviewed on 25 August 2007, Victor Levashov from Maikop (Southern Russia) noticed the extent to which the Soviet system entered the thinking of church ministers. While he did not wish to criticize any pastors, he did observe the influence of the totalitarian communist system upon the leadership style of ministers. Even in Slavic churches in America, many pastors still 'expect the same sort of unconditional respect and obedience that party bosses demanded in the Soviet Union. The youth does not like them. The system encouraged the development of such unbiblical way of thinking.'

An ethical dilemma was one of the factors behind Evangelical emigration to the West. In new conditions of economic and social chaos, people had to learn to survive. Methods and practices restricted during Soviet times (for example, free trade was called *Spekulyatsiya* in Russian) became legal.

Evangelical believers who preached high moral standards in daily living became somewhat disoriented. They were forced to survive, just like millions of other ordinary Russians. Their beliefs and new economic practices began to collide, while they struggled

with employing unethical practices in treating their neighbours. They saw the West as a place where they could work while preserving their integrity and values. Previously Soviet Evangelicals viewed themselves as morally pure compared to the communist society. However, with the fall of communism, Christians realised that the people of God struggled with new freedoms and temptations in a corrupt society as did atheists. Having appeared 'holy' when deprived of choices, their concept of holiness was thoroughly tested under the new circumstances. For some, Evangelicals' emigration appeared to be the solution. The West offered a new life in a democratic society relatively free of difficult daily ethical decisions (Valuisky, 2000, p. 10).

It is evident that, on the one hand, the Evangelical Baptist emigration to the West had considerably weakened churches in the former U.S.S.R. The people who could have served well in local churches now ended up sitting on the back pews of Slavic congregations in America.

On the other hand, the wave of emigration in the 1980s–1990s opened opportunities for Christians that lacked ties with the times of Soviet persecution of the Church and came to faith in the end of the 1980s–1990s (Sergienko, 2011). Valuisky wrote that it is with these Christians that the hope for the future of the Church in the former U.S.S.R. lies, 'Strong national churches and theological institutions are the only hope for our Evangelical movement in Russia. To combat the damage of emigration we must develop enthusiastic and optimistic Russian churches' (Valuisky, 2000, p. 10).

However, it should be noted that not all church leaders succumbed to the hysteria related to emigration to the West. Some stayed and had a non-judgmental attitude toward emigrants. When interviewed on 25 August 2007, pastor Levashov treated the issue of Evangelical emigration as natural to any period in history. He did not see in it anything extraordinary or particular to Evangelical believers in the former U.S.S.R, 'People migrated to different lands in the course of history. Why should Slavic Evangelical emigration be treated any differently?' When interviewed on 2 November 2006, Ruvim Voloshin, a long-time missionary in Chita (Russia) and the Vice-President of the RUECB in charge of mission work, echoed Levashov's statement. Voloshin thought that today Christians face times when it is not important where one lives but what one does, 'It is no longer the location that defines a person but a person that defines the location.'

Slavic Evangelical emigrants did not forget their brothers and sisters in the former U.S.S.R. They preferred to stay informed and involved in church life in their homeland. Many Slavic churches in America and Canada support missionaries and church planters in the former Soviet Union. One of the better-known examples is the California-based Pacific

Slavic Baptist Association headed by Nikolai Bugriev. A considerable number of churches were involved in construction and charity projects by supplying funding to congregations in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Central Asia.

Ethnic Germans who emigrated to Germany still had strong ties with the Evangelical work in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Light of the Gospel mission offered financial support to Baptist work in these two countries. Young people from Slavic Evangelical communities in America often organized mission trips to their historic homeland, spreading the Christian faith where possible. Bethany Baptist Church from Crystal, Minnesota, U.S.A. sent various youth teams to the Northern part of Moldova (Oknitsa) to hold Christian children's camps. Young people from the same church travelled as far as Chukotka, Autonomous District of Russia. Members of the Russian Baptist Church in Shakopee, Minnesota, even criticized the leadership of their church for an imbalance between involvement in mission work in Russia and resources devoted to local ministries, 'I hope that the church council will take a note that the congregation should invest more into local ministries rather than giving humongous amounts of money to missions in the former Soviet Union' (2012e).

Vyacheslav Tsvirin'ko indicated that emigrants from Russia/the former Soviet Union usually tried to form ethnically based churches. Though there were exceptions, such congregations were mostly concerned with mission work in the former Soviet Union. Gladyshev pointed out that up to 80 percent of mission budgets of churches that belong to the Pacific Slavic Baptist Association were dedicated to work in the former Soviet Union (Gladyshev, 2013). This fact helped the business of evangelism in their homeland because 'ultimately emigrants and their children were the most effective missionaries to the people in the former Soviet Union' (Tsvirin'ko, 2000, p. 11).

However, it has to be noted that the Slavic Evangelical community in America often voiced criticism over what they thought were 'liberal tendencies' in their own communities as well as in Evangelical congregations in the former Soviet Union. The leadership of the RUECB, for example, came under criticism from Slavic Evangelical leaders in the United States of America who allowed the performance of a drama depicting the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (2006). This tendency showed that while change does take place in Evangelical churches in Russia and other former republics of the U.S.S.R., the Evangelical emigrant community in North America still pretty much held to the mentality and way of life it became used to while living behind the 'Iron Curtain'.

The emigration of evangelicals to the West was an entirely new phenomenon for several generations of believers, who previously lived in the Soviet Union where the authorities restricted travel abroad. Emigration provided for believers an escape from the past



of communist persecutions, yet it offered a number of new challenges, such as (1) generational rift, (2) adaptability to the new culture and (3) preservation of Slavic culture, Russian/Ukrainian language and a distinct way of worship. Emigrants struggled to find a proper balance between work, church and family life. They faced difficulties in attempts to preserve the 'distinct Slavic way' of church regulations and discipline, which, as time went by, became somewhat foreign to the new generation that grew up in the West and was not familiar with realities of life in the Soviet Union. One of the younger emigrants commented to the leadership of the Shakopee Russian Baptist Church, Minnesota, U.S.A., '[Your] sermons are quite difficult for us to understand. Many issues regarding church discipline, such as *otluchenie* (excommunication) trouble us. We, the young people, exist "in our own world." No one seems to notice when someone comes to church for the first time' (2012e).

Slavic Evangelical emigration considerably weakened existing churches in Russia and the CIS, which to this very day exist in many places more in a self-preserving form. This fact profoundly affected the church's ability to transform the surrounding society. With experienced and talented leaders of the Soviet era now gone, churches have to 'make do' with the cadres that are available and that have no plans of emigrating in the nearest future.

Though believers cite a variety of different reasons for emigration to the West, on the basis of analysis of responses to the interview questions, as well as from study of the literature on the subject, the author came to the conclusion that emigration took place because Evangelicals, severely persecuted in 1920s - mid 1980s, felt like 'strangers in their home land' and no longer held a strong attachment to Russia, which was only reinforced by the collapse of the U.S.S.R and chaos of the 1990s.

## **4.8 The Development of Evangelical Churches in the Post-Soviet Space**

### **4.8.1 Tradition and Traditionalism of Post-Soviet Evangelicals**

During the Soviet rule, Soviet authorities made every effort to marginalize Evangelical churches and their members from the mainstream life of society. Having been denied the option of pursuing higher education, church members developed an internal culture. On the one hand, it served as a protective buffer from the influence of the outside world and the infiltration of undesirable and suspicious people into the midst of congregations. On the other hand, it further alienated Evangelical believers from society.

By the time 1990's came, the internal church culture had two important aspects: a strict dress code and a set of standards of behaviour for members. Pastors emphasized virtues such as modesty in outward appearance, encouraging women to wear head covers, as well as to abstain from the use of cosmetics. Ministers emphasized natural beauty as opposed to worldly

appearance. Victor Loginov, interviewed on 7 March 2006, stated that tradition ‘substituted the message of the Gospel. Instead of paying attention to people’s needs, believers noticed makeup and earrings.’ Church leaders recommended that believers abstain from attending public entertainment. Pastors also encouraged Christians not to own television sets so that families and children would not be influenced by atheistic propaganda (Turlac, 2004a, p. 12).

When interviewed on 4 December 2006, Vitali Kulikov stated, ‘Evangelicals leaders often compared the church to a ship at sea, which the waters of the world could not penetrate.’ In an interview conducted on 31 March 2006, Pavel Zhironov indicated, ‘Pastors guarded their congregations from associations with society, believing these measures protected members from worldly influence and keeping them safe inside the “ship of the church”.’

Thus, the situation led to an internally developed Evangelical culture that reinforced some of the prohibitions imposed by the state by giving them a biblical rationale. Sergienko summarized it in this way:

Before too long, Evangelicals found themselves in the ghetto of their own culture because of purpose-driven policies of the state and apocalyptic paradigm, which churches upheld. Official Soviet propaganda aimed to portray Baptists as inhumane and backward-thinking sectarians. Very few people from the surrounding society ever risked coming into Baptist ‘houses of prayer’, which usually were located on the outskirts of towns and from which one could hear only sounds of minor-key songs performed by twenty elderly people (Sergienko, 2011).

The government regulations of the 1960s regarding church activities limited the use of musical instruments to just the piano and placed limits on the use of audio equipment during church services. By the beginning of the 1990s, this practice of AUCECB churches became so ingrained in the mentality of ministers that they voluntarily advocated a ban on the use of any other musical instruments, such as guitars or drums, during worship services.

The new regulations prohibited the baptism of persons under the age of eighteen and pressured Evangelicals to minimize the number of baptisms of persons between the ages of eighteen and thirty. In addition, Soviet authorities favoured prolonging the period between conversions and actual baptisms to be able to apply pressure upon new converts to dissuade them from their decision to be baptized.

By the 1990s, many ministers who were accustomed to strict Soviet rules accepted state limitations as the *status quo* to such a degree that they began to justify the necessity of denying the right of baptism to those under the age of 18. The age of Jesus at baptism was cited as the major reason. Church leaders went so far as to develop lengthy catechetical training (that often lasted up to six months) for new converts and intentionally prolonged the period between one’s conversion and baptism, citing the necessity of seeing first ‘the fruit of the repentance’ in one’s life prior to admitting one to baptism.

When interviewed on 10 June 2007, George Boltnew made the following statement regarding the situation with traditionalism in Russian Evangelical congregations:

Traditionalism penetrated many of the Evangelical churches in the former Soviet Union. This was evident in the 1990s even in the Moscow Baptist Theological Seminary, the major hub for training Baptist pastors. Authoritarianism is still very prevalent in churches and Bible schools there. If the president or provost issues a certain directive, one does not need to agree. One must obey. Unfortunately, this still goes on today. I always try to remind myself that several generations had this kind of experience. Things just do not change overnight.

No church can exist apart from tradition, the vehicle that carries the values, beliefs, and principles upon which churches stand from generation to generation. According to Gennady Sergienko, 'Tradition is nothing else but actualisation of the Scriptures in new historical conditions' (Sergienko, 2010, p. 1). The Ukrainian pastor, Konstantin Goncharov, points out that in the *Russian Synodal Translation* of the Bible the word *tradition* comes from the Greek term *paradosis* meaning 'something that is passed from one person to another'. Goncharov states that in the Scriptures it is used both positively and negatively (Goncharov, 2008). The theologian, Jaroslav Pelikan, wrote, 'Tradition is "the living faith of the dead" while traditionalism, in contrast, is "the dead faith of the living"' (Pelikan, 1971, p. 9).

Traditions change as time goes by. Some become irrelevant and new ones appear. Soviet Evangelicals always emphasized the well-known principle of the Protestant Reformation, *Sola Scriptura* (Ryaguzov, 2010). Evangelical preachers emphasised that, unlike the Russian Orthodox Church, they held to the 'pure Word' and preached the uncompromised counsel of God in contrast to holding to the *paradosis*. In the relationship of Scripture and tradition, Evangelicals claimed to give primacy to the written Word of God (Ryaguzov, 2010).

Unfortunately, some traditions developed during the Soviet period that prevented Evangelical churches from adapting to the new conditions of freedom of religion, and that came to the Soviet Union at the time of Gorbachev's Perestroika and continued in post-Soviet Russia in the 1990s (Cherenkov, 2011b). Observing tendencies in Evangelical churches in the 1990s, Sergienko wrote:

During less than 150 years of existence of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Russia, they distinguished themselves as a separate and distinct denomination. They also developed their own traditions. The factor of autonomy of each church further complicated matters and made the process of formation of traditions unpredictable. Traditions in churches were usually formed under pressure because of the influence of some authoritative leader or a group of leaders (Sergienko, 2010c, p. 7).

When interviewed on 5 December 2006, AUCECB Former General Secretary Alexei Bychkov said that Russian society has had traditionalism and ritualism 'in its blood' since the baptism of Kievan Rus by Prince Vladimir in 988 C.E.:

We can see deeply engrained traditionalism when the leaders of Russia start to make signs of a crucifix in public. Many people in the 1990s were willing to follow the 'tsar.' They played with Christianity. It was convenient back then to be called Christian, so they went for it. As Evangelical Christian-Baptist

believers, we thought that the 1990s would bring about the transformation of the large part of the population of the former U.S.S.R., just as Prokhanov dreamed. The picture, however, turned out to be very different.

When interviewed on 7 March 2006, Loginov stated, 'Many Evangelical ministers saw tradition as a vehicle that preserved unity. Some never adapted to the fact of the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the subsequent division of the Moscow-based AUCECB into regional Evangelical unions.' During the interview on August 15th, 2006 Yakov Franchuk lamented the divisions that exist among churches of the 1990s:

I think that the collapse of the Soviet Union brought with it some bad things. There are many churches in one city today. Regretfully, each church has its own goals and plans. On one hand, we should applaud to these kinds of developments. Yet, I regret that we have lost the sense of unity, understanding of each other, and brotherly support. There are broken links that we see today. During Soviet times, we stood united. I did not worry about my congregation as much then as I worry now. After the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., one union ceased to exist. Everyone just pulled in different directions.

The lack of academic preparation of the Evangelical ministers led to the absence of a healthy and consistent theological tradition that would ensure continuity of doctrine as well as the adaptability to the change prompted by political, economic, and social factors (Sergienko, 2011).<sup>72</sup> The aim of theology is to summarize the teachings of Scripture and to make them relevant in the contemporary life of believers (Humphreys, 1994, pp. 5-12). The Soviet regime crushed early attempts by Ivan Prokhanov and others to develop Evangelical theological education. This action extremely weakened Soviet Evangelicals and contributed to the rise of enormous complications in their adaptability to the new realities of the 1990s (Mikhovich, p. 2).

Because of the absence of academic training and any consistent homiletical tradition, Evangelical preaching was often experience-based instead of Scripture-based (Mikhovich, p. 25), which led to considerable differences in homiletical interpretations from one church to another. Victor Khmelev wrote:

Authority and power come from God and not from our own opinions. What is important is not what people desire to hear but what God wants to say. I pity preachers who let people know just their own opinions. Only God's Word gives us authority worthy of any trust. Some preachers tend to ignore the very book they hold in their hands. They read the text from the Scriptures but then begin to preach on a very different topic. Instead of offering an exposition of the biblical text, they offer examples from their own lives. Moreover, after doing this a hundred times in a row, they complain that no one wants to listen to them and that there is no growth in the church (Khmelev, p. 4.)

Post-Soviet Evangelicals, with some exceptions, manifested their inability to shift from the mentality of a persecuted church to a church reaching out to a society that was undergoing traumatic transformation. Evangelical congregations placed a larger value upon the self-

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<sup>72</sup> Dr. Ales' Dubrovsky offers a comprehensive analysis of 'theological fundamentalism' of Russian/Soviet Evangelicals. See DUBROVSKY, A. 2011. Bogoslovskiy fundamentalizm kak tormozyashchiy faktor v razvitii evangel'skikh tserkvey postsovetskogo perioda. In: CHERENKOV, M. (ed.) *Forum 20: Dvadsat' let religioznoy svobody i missii*. Kiev: Dukh i litera, Assotsiatsia Dukhovnoye vozrozhdeniye.

preservation of internal order and outward holiness than upon being 'the light and salt of the world' by adequately responding to the challenges that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. Churches exhibited more interest in matters of eschatology than evangelism and social transformation. They frequently were more concerned with matters of inner holiness and rapture than going into the world as stated in Matthew 28:19–20. Thus, they often stood apart from the political and social processes that swept Russia and other former Soviet republics.

#### **4.8.2 Liturgical Aspects of Church Life**

Though Evangelicals do not regard themselves as belonging to a liturgical Church, the term liturgy (Greek *leitourgia*) is used here in its general meaning, which means issues related to the theology and practice of worship. The liturgical life of churches varied. It depended on the size, location, and demographics of each church. Many of the older congregations in smaller towns and villages had a worship service that differed from that of the larger churches in the big cities. Churches in the big cities had one 'presbyter' (from Greek *presbyteros* - 'elder'), the term used in the U.S.S.R. However, in this study the more common English terminology is 'pastor'. Churches did not have a pastoral service where a pastor preached every Sunday. Usually the pastor had more of an administrative role over a team of preachers gathered into a Fraternal Council (Rus. *Bratskiy sovet*). Out of this team, three to four preachers would preach at each service. This was common in both big and small churches. The main difference was that in the smaller towns they would not have choirs or many poems whereas in a big church the programme had many participants.

The worship service in Evangelical churches was restricted to church buildings. Any outside activities were banned by the Soviet state. A typical registered Evangelical church held from three to four worship services during the week, usually on Thursday and Saturday evenings and two on Sunday – morning and evening. When interviewed on 10 June 2007, George Boltnew remembered:

The Central Moscow Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church was the only open house of prayer. During the week, believers had three choir practices and three worship services. Even though it took some people two hours to get there, their zeal to be a choir member oversaw the travel.

A high frequency of worship services was the result of Christians being able to get together as a congregation and participate in religious activities not prohibited by the state. Even so, the state did not abstain from controlling even this aspect of church life, as they often used informers to infiltrate local churches.

Biblical sermons and prayers were the main emphasis during worship services. A typical Evangelical worship service usually lasted at least two hours and included three to four sermons, which were delivered by pastors, deacons and lay pastors (Sawatsky, 1981, pp.

339-341). Multi-ethnic churches, for example, some Baptist churches in Moldova and Central Asia, usually had at least one sermon preached in the language of the local population. The rest were preached in Russian (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 258-266).

Deacons were charged with the task of preaching the Bible even during the period of persecution. Many pastors were imprisoned and/or exiled during Stalin's reign therefore deacons had to step forward in their faith and occupy the pulpit so that the church would continue to grow in the knowledge of the Scriptures (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 109).

The same could be said of the category of 'lay pastors'. (Rus. *Propovednik*) With the imprisonment of a majority of pastors in the 1930s–1940s, there often was no minister in the area to ordain a candidate for the pastorate. Thus, lay pastors *de facto* served as church leaders while not having a formal ordination (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 109-110).

Since evangelistic themes were excluded from preaching, Baptist pastors, deacons and lay pastors (lay preachers) emphasized several other influential principles, such as: (1) The Second Coming of Christ and (2) Sanctification of a believer in his and her daily walk with God. Quite often preachers emphasized that Christ was coming very soon. Some of them even resorted to statements that Jesus might come before the new millennium (Sawatsky, 1981, pp. 107-115).

Preaching in Evangelical churches lacked any systematic approach and often was based upon one's Christian experience learned from suffering for Christ (Ton, 2002, p. 13).<sup>73</sup> The use of multiple texts from the Scriptures was quite common as opposed to the development of one major theme.

The sanctification of a believer was emphasized in terms of moral purity, appropriate conduct and modesty in dress. Since Evangelicals were banned from witnessing to their neighbours, friends and co-workers, they were encouraged to show Christ-like examples by loving their neighbours as themselves in daily life. They were called to witness about Christ not by mouth but with good works.

Alexander Negrov, President of St. Petersburg Christian University, and Miriam Charter, Associate Professor of Educational Ministries at the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, pointed to the 'absence of Russian Protestant theology' in the classical meaning of this term. Theology was not learned from books but rather from the experience of fighting atheism. Negrov and Charter stated, 'Our theology [was] not yet formulated or systematised' (Alexander Negrov, 1997, pp. 7–8). According to them, three areas prevented the

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<sup>73</sup> The concept of 'Theology of Suffering' (Rom. *Teologia suferintei*) enjoyed exceptional popularity among Evangelicals in Russia/Soviet Union, as well as in Soviet Bloc countries of Eastern Europe. The concept was popularized by Romanian theologian and dissident Dr. Iosif (Joseph) Ton (2002).

development of Russian Baptist theology. First of all, communist authorities applied pressure upon Baptists. Secondly, churches concentrated more 'on forms and not on beliefs.' And third, there was an absence of critical thinking, which was consistently desired by the Soviet system (Alexander Negrov, 1997, pp. 7–8).

Evgeni Pavlov, a graduate of Moscow Baptist Theological Seminary and later a professor, argued with Negrov and Charter over the existence of theology in Evangelical churches in the U.S.S.R. He stated that though theology might not have existed in Baptist churches in its academic form and understanding, it certainly was present as a set of beliefs and practices. According to Pavlov, there was theology, and still is. The very existence of Protestant churches struggling against the regime and professing to be Christian churches reflected theological affirmations about God and human life in the light of this perception of God. Pavlov was convinced that a tendency to dismiss the seventy years of the communist regime as a period of theological stagnation only led Russians to conclude that they had to *create* 'Russian Protestant theology' *ex nihilo* and this was simply not true. Protestants had a theological tradition. It should not be dismissed as non-existent. According to Pavlov, the only way for Russian Protestants to succeed in the establishment of their theological position was to turn back to their roots (Pavlov, 2001, pp. 3–5).

Western visitors often marvelled at the 'fire of prayer' (Rus. *Plamya molitvy*), which existed in the church in the Soviet Union. A typical worship service usually had six to seven instances when people in the congregation prayed aloud. Usually the majority of sermons were concluded with prayer. The preacher would let three to four people from the congregation pray before he concluded the prayer time. In some churches they prayed after every sermon, which was three to four times during the worship. Some churches chose to pray after the first and last sermon.

The congregation would sit during sermons, but when believers prayed, they prayed while standing or kneeling. They did not consider it appropriate to pray while sitting. When they kneeled, it was considered a gesture of reverence toward God. Prayers were said out loud. Some larger churches preferred to appoint people to pray. It was common to recite the Lord's Prayer either in the beginning or at the end of the worship service, a practice borrowed from the Pentecostals.

Prayers usually had an eschatological dimension. While praying, believers asked Jesus to return as soon as possible. Christ's second coming was seen as a release from the burdens and difficulties of this age.

Music was always an intrinsic part of worship for the Evangelicals in the Soviet Union. Speaking about the inner connection between singing and prayer, Baptist historian Sergey

Savinsky indicated that congregational singing always united believers as they prayerfully worshipped the Lord. Singing in Evangelical Baptist churches was birthed from the inner longing of believers to sing praises to God. This is why many hymns have a theme of unity built into them (Savinsky, 1989).

After World War II, Evangelical congregations reorganized and revitalized their choirs. Many of them had ceased to exist during the devastating war. The majority of choir directors did not have any formal musical education, yet they were eager to learn from their older church members. In many regions of the Soviet Union, Evangelical churches longed to have choirs, yet they experienced a shortage of able conductors.

Where permitted, many large registered AUCECB churches had choirs that had weekly or bi-weekly practices. Rehearsals were usually held right after worship services to avoid attracting the attention of state authorities. They were often camouflaged as a continuation of worship services because of the restrictions on extra activities.

Choirs were a noteworthy part of the worship service in the larger cities. Usually the church would have several choirs involving seniors, middle-aged people, youths and/or children. Youth choirs were permitted especially at the end of the 1980s. Some churches had large men's choirs that were very popular; who sang on special occasions and celebrations. Programmes of church activities during the week were based on choir practices and choir music. Evangelical churches paid a lot of attention to the quality of their choirs. They aimed for superiority of singing even though it was very difficult to get music degrees during that time. Church leaders always encouraged members to participate in choirs. They would sing at the beginning and end of each service and also offered special music after every sermon. The choir could sing as many as four to six songs during the service. A larger church would have four services during the week, the choir might then be asked to participate in every service. In the smaller churches, they paid more attention to singing congregational hymns and often people with the gift of singing would come to the front of the congregation and sing. Often those special songs were written by them or they copied the song from another musician. At times it was impossible to find out who originally composed the song.

Choirs often shared pieces of music with each other. This was necessary as there were very few Christian choir books. While the choir sang, the congregation often stood up to express their support for the words and theme of the music. Evangelical churches were determined to teach music to their members. Often a church would designate a special time to tutor upcoming musicians or to instruct the congregation on a new hymn. If financially able, parents were encouraged to send their musically gifted children to music schools. It is hard to say what criteria were selected for the songs Evangelical churches used during worship



services. Yet it is evident that some of the pieces sung by church choirs were borrowed from classical Russian composers such as Peter I. Tchaikovsky and Dmitry S. Bortnyansky.

In the 1960s–70s, talented Christian poets and composers further developed Evangelical hymnody. Among well-known names were, Artemiy Kazimirsky, Sergey Batsuk, Nikolay Vysotsky, Dmitry Voyevoda, Veniamin Kreyman and Vasiliy Alperov (Savinsky, 1989).

AUCECB General Secretary, Alexander Karev, stated that in Evangelical hymnody the words and their meaning had priority over the melody (Karev, 2009, p. 500). He felt that Baptist hymns were filled with the good news about salvation in Christ, His life, death and resurrection and, in which, one could see the image of Christ the Saviour. He admonished believers to be ‘edified by the content of hymns in the same manner they listen to sermons’ (Karev, 2009, p. 551).

Early on, Yakov Zhidkov, President of AUCECB (until 1966) stressed the importance of having checks and controls over what music was used in Evangelical churches. Songs and hymns composed by unknown writers was discouraged because the content may be contradictory to the teaching of the Bible and Baptist doctrines (Savinsky, 1989).

The AUCECB was allowed to publish much needed hymnals as the Gorbachev era dawned upon the Soviet Union. They were edited by Evangelical musicians and published in 1980, 1984 and 1988 (Savinsky, 1989). Since the beginning of the 1970’s, Unregistered CCECB Baptists published thousands of copies of hymnals in their secret publishing house *Khristianin*. Konstantin Vladyanu, one of the Evangelical churchmen from Moldova, in his memoirs wrote that he was directly involved in printing Christian literature and became very skilled as time went by. He also tried to teach the techniques of printing to many of his friends – the young people from the church. Christians published Christian poetry, books, hymnals and imprisoned leaders’ letters to churches (Vladyanu, 2008, p. 148).

It was an honour for Christians to own a published hymnal. People would bring them to church worship from home. Owning a hymnal was dangerous, especially if it came from an unregistered church's printing press or was printed abroad. In such cases, the home of a believer was searched by the KGB. A few Evangelicals actually owned hymnals, so the worship leader would read the words of each stanza, and then the congregation would join him in singing. This process was done as many as four times until the congregation learned the new hymn. While reading the words of a particular hymn, the worship leader would put emphasis on certain words in order to voice the theme of the song. Hymns were usually sung in the minor key and reflected the sufferings of the believers and their deep faith in God.

Like hymns, Christian poetry was a key portion of the service. After the invocation, the choir sang and then someone read a piece of poetry sometimes followed by another piece of

music. Therefore, there were at least two or three solos and poetry recitations during a service. Hand-written poetry books were shared among believers. Some of them spent countless hours copying poems and preserving them for future generations.

If writing poetry was someone's calling, he/she developed a handwritten notebook with hundreds of authentic pieces and those authored by someone else, usually unknown authors. These spirit-filled poems were a sort of mini-sermons, which often were accompanied by reflective music. It was usual to see the congregation respond with tears to moving poetic testimonies.

The method of collecting an offering was distinct in each church. Some churches had offerings at every worship service, while other churches called for a weekly offering. The offering could simply be a plate being passed among the congregation or a collection box at the exit of the church. The offering was never slotted into a special moment of the worship service. It was done at the conclusion of the service. Even though offerings were important to sustain the church, sermons regarding tithing or stewardship were not commonly preached. Notably, churches did not suffer financially.

During persecution, money was not a big issue because the pastors were not financially supported by the church. Pastors would have jobs outside the church and would maintain their lifestyle through their own efforts. More details will be given on this later in the chapter. The service was solely focused on worship, communion, baptism, and fellowship. The offering never had a parallel significance in the Evangelical church.

#### **4.8.3 Baptism and Communion in Evangelical Life**

'The Confession of Faith of Evangelical Christians–Baptists' defines communion as a belief that the Lord's Supper (Rus. *Prelomlenie khleba*) was a commandment of Jesus Christ so that believers would remember and proclaim His suffering and death on the cross. According to the Confession, The Lord's Supper belonged to the church until Christ comes again. Participants in the Lord's Table testified of their union with the Lord and each other. Only those who were born-again Christians, had received adult baptism, and had peace with God and the Church could participate in communion. Evangelicals believe that bread and wine point to the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

In larger churches, baptism was performed once or twice a year during the summer when the waters of lakes or rivers were warmer. Candidates went through rigorous preparations before being accepted for baptism. It usually took two to three months of weekly catechetical classes to prepare for baptism. Even then they were quizzed by church leadership and/or *Bratskiy sovet* regarding their knowledge of the Bible, the principles of the church and

their lifestyle. If their lifestyle was not in accord with church standards, the church authorities declined baptism to the candidate. This meant they had not 'separated themselves from the world, old friends and old life style', and would have to wait a year in which they should correct their lifestyle before being reconsidered for baptism. At the end of that period, the aspirant would again be asked questions from the Bible or questions about their lifestyle. The candidate may also be required to share his testimony either at a meeting of the leaders or sometimes in front of the entire congregation.

In large churches, there were two types of baptismal candidates: children of believers and recently converted people. If smaller churches had only one or two candidates, they would travel to a bigger church to participate in the baptismal service and share in a joint celebration.

Baptismal candidates were dressed in white. They were baptised by immersion (the whole body had to go under water). In front of the congregation and before baptism, the pastor would ask each candidate questions related to the confession of their faith. After a person had been baptized, the whole congregation would celebrate by singing a jubilant song or the orchestra would perform special music. After the baptism, a special prayer of anointing of the Holy Spirit was pronounced over candidates. They received flowers and shared a big celebratory meal with the congregation and their families.

Soviet Evangelicals placed special emphasis upon adult believer's baptism as opposed to infant baptism that was practised in the Russian Orthodox Church. The Soviet State prohibited the baptism of those under the age of eighteen. It also required Evangelical pastors to reduce the number baptized between the ages of eighteen and thirty. As time went by, this age requirement ingrained itself into Baptist life and practice so deeply that churches began to regard it as if it were the scriptural truth.

For example, the AUCECB church in Kishinev, Moldova still holds to the age requirement established during Soviet times even twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Church leadership secures written permission of parents (even if they are unbelievers) when the candidate for baptism lives in their home.

Interviews with evangelical leaders demonstrated that sometimes pastors were very resourceful in breaking the rules that were set up by the government for baptism and the ages of people being baptized. Christians could get a three years' sentence for baptizing someone under eighteen. When interviewed on 20 March 2006, Piotr Zeona said:

When church leaders saw a born again person living a renewed life who wanted to participate in the Holy Communion, they could not refuse him or her the right to be baptised. Adults were openly baptised in the pond. As for those who were not adults yet, they were tested on Friday evening and, after that, baptised secretly at night. On Sunday, new church members were presented to the church.

The State did everything possible to keep the youth away from the church. Since the atheistic educational system was in place since the 1950s, by the time the young people reached age eighteen, most of them were already affected by ten years of atheistic propaganda in public schools. High school students from Evangelical families were torn between the possibilities of joining *Komsomol*, which offered all kinds of privileges in life, and joining the local church through baptism.

Young men from AUCECB's registered churches were often advised against baptism prior to military conscription due to the risk of extreme harassment of Christians that existed in the Soviet Army. Years spent in the army, in turn, were seen as a period of trials and strengthening of faith. Those who survived the influence of atheistic pressure in the army often received baptism after being discharged from the service.

Baptism was an important condition for membership in the local church. It was, so to speak, the 'ticket' into the ship of the Church, which was viewed as a safe haven in the midst of dark waters of the outer world. Because of persecutions, Evangelical congregations wanted to be sure that baptismal candidates understood the seriousness of the step they were taking. Extensive interviews of the candidate by church leaders and often by the whole congregation preceded the decision of whether to admit an individual to baptism. The candidate was often required to demonstrate 'the fruit of new life' (Rus. *Plody novoy zhizni*) prior to baptism, which meant that he had to lead a highly moral personal and family life according to the commandments of Christ.

Baptism, in the understanding of Soviet Evangelicals, represented a clear separation of a believer from a 'sinful world.' It also meant that one was committed to live and, if necessary, pay with his life for his faith. Y.Y. Vins held an opinion that only those who already were members of the Universal Church by faith in Christ should be admitted into the membership of local churches. Only those people who separated themselves from the world and dedicated themselves to the Lord should be accepted into the church (2Cor.8:5). Only such people would serve as a blessing to churches and the world. If this important principle was neglected, there would be consequences to face and glory would not be brought to our Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor.2:12–15) (Vins, 1924).

We find the following understanding of the relationship between baptism and church membership reflected in the 'Confession of Faith of Evangelical Christians – Baptists':

Baptism is a condition for acceptance into the membership of the local church. It should be preceded by repentance and new birth (Acts 2:38; 8:37; 19:2–5; Rom.10: 9–10; 1Tim.6:12). We baptise those who readily receive the word of God into their hearts and believe in it (Acts 2:41). (*Veroucheniye evangel'skikh khristian – baptistov*)

Soviet Evangelicals practised baptism by immersion. Alexander Karev wrote, ‘Christ left for us a stipulation of how baptism should be conducted, i.e. by immersion. The Greek word for baptism means “immersion”’ (Karev, 2009, p. 554).

In a document, entitled 'Our Baptist Principles' (Rus. *Nashi baptistskie printsipi*), Y. Y. Vins described the form of baptism common for Soviet Evangelical churches. He stated that after an extensive interview with the leaders of the church, one should be baptized before many witnesses according to 1 Timothy 6:12. Both the one who baptized and the one who was going to be baptized were to stand in the water (Acts 8:38). The pastor would say the following formula, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” After that, the person was fully immersed in the water one time. Then raised from the water (Matt. 3: 13–15) (Vins, 1924).

In Soviet Evangelical churches, baptism was understood as a symbolic act that exhibited the readiness of a believer to be baptized into the death of Christ and be raised together with Christ to the newness of life. In the *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, the Russian Evangelical theologian, Mikhail Ivanov, pointed out that baptism had been instituted by Jesus Christ. Jesus gave His followers a commandment to baptize all those who would believe (Matt.28:19). Thus, baptism was not an empty ritual but an honorary duty of every Christian. It was an act that followed the decision to confess one’s sins (1Pet.3:21; Acts 2:38; 2:41). Baptism affirmed that a believer belonged to Christ. According to Ivanov, baptism had the profound symbolic meaning of burial of the old sinful life and resurrection to the newness of life. In baptism, a believer symbolically united with Christ’s death and had communion with Christ in His resurrection (Rom.6:3–4) (Ivanov).

Unlike Russian Orthodox believers, Soviet Evangelicals did not believe the teaching that through baptism God imparts His special saving grace. Baptism could not be compared to spiritual birth (1Cor.4:15; 1:17). However, this does not mean that God did not have a role in the act of baptism. God acted through baptism just as He did through prayer or the reading of the Bible. Through willing baptism, God strengthened one’s faith and understanding of the meaning of this act (Ivanov). The effect of this act upon an individual believer varied. It depended upon spiritual and prayerful preparation and the sovereign will of God in relation to a believer. However, a believer who had been born again would surely feel the presence and sustenance from the Lord fleshed out in the act of baptism (Ivanov).

Communion was a very important element of worship in the Evangelical church. The observance of communion was the direct result of obedience to the Lord’s command to His followers. Believers were to obey His commands. When Jesus had given thanks, He broke

the bread and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me' (1Cor.11:24).

It was a holy time of worship when the church comes together as one body to remember and celebrate what Christ did for his followers. Pre-communion service during the week offered special times for preparation and the confession of sins. Emotional sermons, music and poetry during communion service focused on the theme of Calvary and Christ's redemptive suffering and death. The purpose of these was to lead people in their identification with Christ's suffering on the cross. Usually, more worshippers came to the communion service than to other services during the week.

According to Soviet Evangelicals, communion was to be performed as closely as possible to how it was done by Jesus and His disciples. This, however, did not mean that churches necessarily used unleavened bread. Usually, one of the female church members baked a sizeable loaf of bread to be used during the Lord's Supper. It was broken by hand by pastors and deacons. Then, a large piece of bread was given to each pastor, who in turn, broke it into small pieces. These were placed on the plate and distributed to every church member. Each believer took a small piece of bread, prayed and silently meditated on Jesus' sacrifice.

Evangelical congregations used real wine for communion. They believed that it was what Jesus used in the Upper Room. The whole congregation usually drank from one big cup (seven or twelve sizeable cups for larger congregations) as a symbol of unity. Congregants would pass the cup from one to another.

Only members in good standing could take part in the communion. It was an extremely important event, therefore, children and those not baptized were not allowed to participate. If there was anyone who was under disciplinary measures from the church, that member usually was not allowed to partake in the communion. Those that had quarrels with fellow church members or family were encouraged to abstain from partaking in the bread and the wine. Newcomers, outsiders and those not wearing proper dress or having excessive make-up, were usually denied communion.

Communion was extremely safeguarded. When bread and wine were handed out to the congregation, it was considered inappropriate for a piece of bread to be dropped on the floor or for a drop of wine to be spilled. If there were leftovers from bread or wine, usually deacons and pastors met in a special room after the service and reverently consumed it. Communion indicated that an individual belonged to an exclusive Christian fellowship. It was extremely important in the life of the church at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s.

A special communion service in Soviet Evangelical churches usually took place on the first Sunday of the month during the morning worship service. Some churches offered communion during the evening service on the same Sunday for those who for some reason were not able to attend the morning worship. It is not clear where the practice of having communion once a month began. Nevertheless it has to be said that regardless of when it was observed, the majority of Evangelical churches followed this practice.

The atmosphere during communion services was solemn and one of remembrance of Christ's death. Pastors and choir directors made sure that hymns and sermon topics matched the occasion. In smaller churches, believers shared the same loaf of bread, which was broken by the pastor and the deacons. They also had one cup for the whole congregation. Medium to large-size congregations had several smaller loaves of bread. The number of cups was usually from seven to twelve. Real wine and homemade bread were used for the communion. It is not clear where this practice originated among Soviet Evangelicals. Western Christians who visited Baptist churches in the U.S.S.R. often marvelled at the fact that real wine (and not juice) was offered during the Lord's Supper, especially as Soviet Evangelicals abstained from the use of alcohol in daily life.

While anyone was welcome to attend the communion service, only members of the local church and of other Evangelical congregations were allowed to partake of the bread and wine. Some local churches practiced closed communion, closed to all non-members, while others specified that all born-again baptized individuals were welcome to participate. In cities where many foreign tourists from other confessions visited, guests were welcome to participate (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 347).

Adult baptism was required for participation in communion. Infant baptism was not acceptable. The Lord's Supper was a demonstration of unity of the church. Only baptized believers who were members of the church could participate. Those excommunicated and under observation of the church could not participate (2Thes.3:14). It was desirable that a believer should participate in communion at his local church. The exception would be that he could participate in the Lord's Supper in another Evangelical church as long as they shared the same understanding of baptism (Eph.4:5) (Ivanov). Ivanov indicated:

Participation in communion was the responsibility of each individual believer. The Lord's Supper was a holy communion of Christians. Those who did not consider themselves worthy should not participate in it without reflecting upon the spiritual essence of this act. Participants in the Lord's Supper should concentrate upon the sufferings of Christ and His sacrifice offered on Calvary (Ivanov).

Elements of the communion in Evangelical churches were usually displayed on the communion table. Before the actual communion, the pastor usually offered a special sermon on the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Then the text from 1 Corinthians 11:17–32 was read.

Pastors prayed over the bread. Following their prayer, the bread was distributed to the congregation. The prayer over the cup followed, after which church members partook of the wine. While the congregation took part in the communion, one of the ministers at the table usually read a narrative about the Suffering Servant from Isaiah 53.

There were theological differences between Soviet Evangelicals and the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. Ivanov wrote that many denominations and individual Christians mistakenly held to the concept of transubstantiation. He felt that the Scriptures clearly taught that we partake of the bread and wine and not of the body and blood (1Cor.11:23–25). He further stated that unity with Christ was an inheritance of every Christian. Even though the elements of the Lord's Supper did not contain the body and blood of Christ, they nevertheless reminded us of them. They also help them become closer to our Lord and Saviour who dwelled within them (Ivanov).

Evangelicals did not consider the Lord's Supper to be a sacrament, but rather an ordinance (Rus. *Ustanovlenie*) of the church, though they emphasized that only ordained ministers could administer communion. The Russian Evangelical historian, Sergey Savinsky, wrote:

Evangelicals teach that communion is an *ordinance* given by the Lord to His Church. It is not a sacrament that is given for our use. The holy Eucharist is not a sacrament but one of the five ordinances that were given to believers (Savinsky, 2006).

Communion had a special meaning for the Evangelical churches in the Soviet Union. For them it was not only a remembrance of Christ's sufferings but also of their own restrictions and persecution from the Soviet State, that led believers to identify with the suffering Christ and relive the reality of His suffering and death on the cross again and again. For many Evangelicals, Christ's suffering was not only an event of the past. It was rather a reminder that His disciples were sharing in His sufferings by living like Christ in a society that despised them.

Thus, Evangelical liturgy varied from church to church, though there were common traits and patterns that can be established. Since church activities during Soviet times were extremely restricted, worship services were 'the heart and soul' of church life. Since any kind of teaching outside of the regular worship hours (excluding weddings and funerals) was prohibited, three or four sermons became the rule of a thumb.

Evangelical worship was characterized by the utmost reverence toward God, which was similar to that found in the Russian Orthodox Church. The Lord's Supper and Baptism occupied a prominent place in Evangelical life and served as landmarks for a believer's introduction to active participation in congregational life and points of check-up of his/her



spiritual condition. Participation in the Lord's Supper was taken extremely seriously because it was regarded as the suffering Russian church's identification with the passion of Christ.

The absence of uniformity in Evangelical churches, on one hand, reflected the classical Baptist tradition, which has the autonomy of the local church at its heart. On the other hand, it contributed to development of a variety of theological views, which often deviated from the classical Baptist views in the West. Outside observers come to the conclusion that Soviet Evangelicals strived to live by Baptist principles while their piety and outward attitude toward the Lord's Supper, baptism and prayer somewhat resembled Russian Orthodox *praxis*.

Overall, the 1990s represented a chaotic decade, during which Evangelicals experienced challenges dealing with their difficult past while attempting to transition from the past to the present. They faced an uncertain future brought on by the collapse of the Soviet Union, into which they had no choice but to enter.

#### **4.8.4 The Role of Pastor**

In order to understand the role of the pastor in the 1990's, there is a need to understand the role of the pastor leading to the 1990's. Evangelical pastors were presented with difficult challenges during the Soviet period. On one hand, they knew that it was an honour and privilege to be set aside for God's work and noble ministry of serving the people. On the other hand, a position of a pastor offered little visible rewards. In fact, it opened one's life to a multitude of threats and grave consequences for him and his family.

Expectations of churches from Evangelical pastors were considerable. In spite of a pastor's business, he was expected to shepherd the flock and provide spiritual nourishment to the congregation. A typical pastor was expected to plan the worship service and preach several times a week during regular weekly services. He was to conduct the weekly (or monthly) meetings of the church committee and plan the agenda. Pastors in AUCECB churches usually presented an annual report at the church business meeting, after which they were approved for ministry in the following year.

He had to visit the sick and deliver the Lord's Supper elements to the homebound church members (a practice that is also found in the Russian Orthodox Church). Pastors of smaller churches often acted as church administrators, taking care of the building and grounds. Ministers in larger churches could enjoy the help of two or three deacons.

All these facts indicate, on one hand, that Evangelical ministers were pressured by the State but on the other hand, they were burdened by the needs of their own families and high expectations from their congregations.

Most pastors had to have a full time secular job to support their families. After work, they would come to the church and do their ministries. Pastors were the most dedicated people in the fellowship leading by example in terms of understanding suffering and ministering to people. In the big cities, pastors often received financial support from their churches but not always. Due to the pressure of atheist propaganda, laws and rules, ministers had to pay high taxes to the authorities if they received a salary from the church. Some congregants perceived that if the pastor received a salary, he was a hired man and may not do an effective ministry from his heart. Congregants honoured their love of God, their sacrifices for God and hope through their faith and demanded the same from their pastors.

There were practically no sermons preached related to the support of pastors or missionaries mainly because there was not a lot of need for money. If a church building was in need of repair, the matter was brought to the attention of the congregation during the business meeting. Usually, congregants met the need with their donations. Because of state prohibitions listed in AUCECB's *Instruktivnoye pis'mo*, registered churches were limited in what they could do regarding evangelistic outreach. CCECB's unregistered churches did not feel that they were bound by AUCECB's ordinance. They conducted evangelistic outreach and offered Bible training to children and teenagers in spite of the existing ban.

According to the Soviet legislation, all churches, and their ministers had to be registered with the state. Registration recognised the church as a legal organisation with a minister who conducted religious activity in a legal way. A single Evangelical church was permitted to have only one pastor, regardless of the size. Because only a limited number of pastors were registered with the state, they were in short supply. Often one pastor had to tend to the needs of the flock in several churches.

Churches that split from the AUCECB in the beginning of 1960s, were not recognized by the Soviet State, and therefore existed illegally. Their pastors, likewise, did not possess a state registration, and hence were prohibited from preaching and conducting any religious activities. It has to be said that the ban did not stop them from preaching, for which they were often sentenced to prison terms.

Being a registered minister with the state who had received the 'green light' to conduct limited religious activities carried with it certain obligations. Usually a pastor fell under the authority of the local office of the State Superintendent for Religious Affairs of the Council for Religious Affairs, which reported to the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. (Rus. *Upolnomochennyi*).

The superintendent's duties included monitoring religious activities of churches in the area and doing everything to limit the spread of religious influence upon the masses.

Superintendents, therefore, often applied pressure upon pastors, restricting their activities to the very minimum, discouraging them from preaching evangelistic messages and involving the younger members of the congregation in its life and ministry.

Ministers often found themselves in a problematic position of having to report to *Upolnomochennyi* the statistics of attendance at worship services, the number of candidates preparing for baptism and the multitude of other matters related to the life of the congregation (Kolomiitsev, 2012). Superintendents often had informers within *Ispolorgans* (Executive Committees) of churches that directly reported to them. Thus, a minister walked a fine line between telling the whole truth about his congregation and being dishonest before God.

Being chosen to carry on the duties of a pastor meant sacrifice for his family. At any moment he could be sent to prison for breaking the anti-religious law. He was responsible for all aspects of church life, and if anything was done without his knowledge, he still had to face the consequences (Kolomiitsev, 2012). It was often customary for Evangelical young people to get together for fellowship. They used different occasions, such as holidays and birthday celebrations to gather together for singing of hymns and Bible study. When such youth groups were discovered, pastors were often the ones who had to explain all the matters involved to state superintendents. Sawatsky wrote: ‘The brave and zealous young people had less fear of the consequences, but it is unfair to dismiss all registered presbyters as cowards’ (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 323).

The number of church ministers in larger AUCECB churches grew in the 1970s–1980s. They drew a salary collected by their congregations. Pastors had to pay approximately 25 per cent income tax (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 325).

#### **4.8.5 The Role of Women in Evangelical Churches**

Women’s role in the 1990’s was a continuation of the role they played before the changes. Women were not allowed to be pastors or deacons. However, they were quite active in the church and played a very important part. Women sang in choirs, prepared communion table, made holiday meals, and recited poetry. They often had their own women’s service where a female lay member would preach. On very unique occasions, there might be a woman preacher that was able to preach the gospel publicly in the church. The congregation usually had more women than men. The women were very committed to attendance of worship services and participation in multiple ministries.

There was a predominance of older women called *babushkas* at the worship services. Participation in a service by singing a solo or duet, teaching Sunday school defied state laws. Some of the women went to prison. One crime was being involved in printing Christian

literature. So, even though women officially did not hold many church positions, unofficially, they were very much involved in all aspects of the ministry of the church.

Even though they did not have formal influence nor hold any significant ministry positions in churches, with the exception possibly of several choir directors, they constituted the majority of church membership and, therefore, could be called the 'pillars' of many Evangelical congregations. Even in present-day Russia, according to the statistics in the *Missionary* magazine, close to 80 percent of RUECB church members are women (Yelena Kruglova, 2005, p. 27).

It is worth noting that a set of principles of the Russian Evangelical churches (Rus. *O sluzhitelyakh tserkvi*) did not specify that only men were to be ordained to pastoral ministry. (1989). Even the Pauline example of Phoebe, who served as deaconess of the church in Cenchrea (see Romans 16:1–2), did not convince Evangelical church leaders that women should be granted access to diaconal ministry. Sergey Babich wrote:

Christ did not leave any certain stipulations concerning women's status in the future organism of the Church. He just mentioned some general things. Jesus did not include women in the office of apostles, and their successors. Yet, He did not reject the help of women in daily affairs, especially what related to helping the apostles in the matters of hospitality and other 'earthly' things. Widows had a special part in church ministry (Babich, 2008).

Evangelical churches in the Central Asian republics of the U.S.S.R. (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) were known for their strong stance on the prohibition of women's leadership in churches. Many Evangelical churches held to the literal understanding of the passage taken from 1 Corinthians 14:34–35: 'Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church' (NIV).

Alexei Smirnov, President of the RUECB, admitted that the understanding of the role of women in churches was quite abstract:

Women can apply themselves in any area of ministry, with an exception of church leadership and teaching of ministers. Women's ministries should be concerned with social work, hospitality and charity. Older women also should teach younger women how to conduct themselves so that their marriages would succeed (Tit.2: 4–5) (Smirnov, 2010).

Although women could not exercise influence from the pulpit, their voices were frequently heard during regular worship services as they fervently prayed for their unbeliever husbands and recited poetry, which was always a part of the Evangelical heritage (Savinsky, 1989). In addition to being limited in what they could do in churches, many Evangelical women, who had unbeliever husbands, faced abuse from them. A lot of them experienced

threats and severe beatings at home, where men would mock them for belonging to the 'Baptist sect'.

Milla Krymm (1894–1979), a member of Pyarnysskaya Evangelical Church (Estonia) was well known for her poetic gift. The collection of her poems, entitled 'Through the Dark Night' was published in 1926. She is the author of over 1,000 poems, many of which are now known as Christian songs. Her poetry is Christ-centred as she longs to find refuge and consolation in Christ (Savinsky, 1989).

One exception to the rule was the Central Moscow Baptist Church that has had a long tradition of women serving as deacons. In spite of the fact that in many Evangelical Christian-Baptist churches deacons preached on a regular basis, this rule did not apply to women. Women, appointed as church deaconesses, usually concerned themselves with matters of charity, visiting the sick and helping the poor and needy in and outside church.

Sawatsky observed that 'Soviet Evangelicals have tended to apologise for the fact that some of their women do lead' (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 329). In a major article for pastors, Vice-President of AUCECB N.A. Levindanto stated that only one deaconess was referred to in the New Testament (Rom.16:1). Since there was no reference to ordination, a woman could lead the worship service and preach, as did Philip's daughters, but the church ordinances should be conducted by ordained men from neighbouring congregations (Levindanto, 1957, pp. 16–17).

Sawatsky noticed at the 1979 congress of AUCECB that ten of the 525 delegates were women. One of them from Moldova asked men not to forget to teach the women, including teaching them when to be silent and when to help. She also made an appeal for the creation of the office of deaconess (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 329).

*History of Evangelical Christians–Baptists in the U.S.S.R.*, published by AUCECB in 1989, recorded at least one instance when a woman was appointed as a lay preacher in the Kishinev AUCECB church. 'Dina Nikiforovna Plotnik is a lay preacher. She is a member of the financial committee at the church and also belongs to the church council. She preaches in Russian and Moldovian languages' (Savinsky, 1989).

Women were encouraged to behave modestly. Instead of speaking up publicly during church business meetings, they were urged to discuss matters with their husbands privately at home. Pastor Smirnov of RUECB acknowledged that women made the church a homely place. Without women, churches would look too ascetic. They bring to our churches elements of beauty and gentleness, which naturally attracts visitors to churches (Smirnov, 2010).

Although women could not teach men in the majority of Evangelical churches, they certainly were permitted to teach other women. Women organized special worship services with the emphasis on prayer. They tried to get together at least once every year for a special

service on the International Baptist Women's Day of Prayer (usually held in the autumn of each year). AUCECB Senior Pastor for Moldova, Reverend Karl Sedletsky, wrote, 'The Kishinev church had a long-lasting tradition of holding special services for women. Sisters in Christ had a warm fellowship during these services. Women preached, sang and prayed.' (Savinsky, 1989).

In spite of restrictions imposed on women in church life, this did not prevent them from exercising leadership roles when pastors and church leaders were taken to prison camps and exiled. In conditions of extreme persecution, especially during Stalin's 'purges', women assumed leadership roles in churches. They preached and made sure that the Evangelical churches in the U.S.S.R. survived.

Women members of unregistered CCECB churches, stood up to the government of the U.S.S.R., pleading for release of their imprisoned husbands. In 1963, after the arrest of the pastor of an unregistered church in Barnaul (Altay), Nikolai Khmara, women formed the Council of Prisoners' Relatives (Rus. *Sovet rodstvennikov uznikov*), which sent a multitude of letters to the government and international organizations pleading for the cause of freedom of religion in the Soviet Union (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 143).

Describing the office of an evangelist, Sawatsky indicated that in registered churches, the evangelist was 'an individual showing promise as a potential preacher'. Weekend evangelistic trips were his major task. Later he may be encouraged to move to another community which was in need of a pastor (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 328).

*History of Evangelical Christians-Baptists* records instances when women were appointed as regional evangelists, as happened in Bessarabia (Moldova). Lydia Caldararu and Evangelina Gorokholinskaya were exceptional, courageous young women who devoted their lives to the cause of evangelism (Turlac, 2008, p. 74). They fulfilled every task church leaders set before them. The key to their success was their close relationship with the Lord. Lydia Caldararu accepted Christ when she was quite young. She received training at the theological seminary in Bucharest, Romania. After the completion of her studies, she travelled all over Bessarabia preaching the good news. She often had to walk for miles but in spite of all challenges and difficulties, she was always joyful and spiritually vigilant (Savinsky, 1989).

Gorokholinskaya was officially appointed by the Bessarabian Evangelical Union as a regional evangelist. She was also involved in teaching music and singing to choir directors of Bessarabian Evangelical churches. In 1919, she organized the first instrumental ensemble in the Kishinev church. Gorokholinskaya was arrested seven times for her religious activities (Savinsky, 1989).

Women's role in raising new generations of Christians and Christian leaders was exceptional. Sawatsky indicates that 'without discounting the good work these various office holders do, the fact remains that it is the women who have and still contribute the lion's share to the existence of the church' (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 329).

While limited in what they could do in relation to church leadership, they certainly exercised leading roles in their homes, teaching children the Bible and organizing special get-togethers for Christian children under the pretext of birthdays and various holidays.

Women from CCECB and Mennonite churches were especially creative in maintaining the Sunday school education network for children in spite of state prohibitions. In Karaganda, Kazakhstan, 81.5 percent of the children were taught religion in their homes and 46.3 percent of these were active believers. Only nine percent of the children had joined the Youth Pioneer organization. Approximately 20 percent of Mennonite membership was less than thirty years of age and in the city of Tomsk, it was as high as 41 percent. More than half of the membership was under fifty. In Pavlodar Oblast, 71 percent were under the age of fifty, in Novosibirsk Oblast 77.5 percent were under fifty, while in Tomsk 81 percent were under fifty (Ipatov, 1977, pp. 87–88).

CCECB charged parents with personal responsibility of raising their children in the Christian spirit. According to Sawatsky, 'Children are citizens of heaven, for whose life the parents are responsible. If a citizen of heaven perishes because the parents were at fault, the Lord will exact strict punishment, so much so, that it would have been better had he not been born' (Sawatsky, 1981, p. 321).

#### **4.8.6 The Question of Development Strategy and Education**

Since Gorbachev's reforms and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union had a shocking effect upon Evangelical churches and society, neither local churches nor the AUCECB had a strategy that would prepare them for the new opportunities and challenges (Solodovnikov, 2004). In the summer of 1991, the Soviet Union was rapidly disintegrating. With rising nationalism and an awareness of self-identity, AUCECB was no longer able to serve as a unifying centre. Ukrainian Evangelicals and those in other republics formed their own unions and associations, which no longer had to answer to Moscow.

At the AUCECB's last congress that took place in Moscow in 1992, its fate was sealed when delegates learned that AUCECB President, Dr. Grigoriy Komendant, accepted the nomination and was elected president of the All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (Turlac, 1992, p. 1). Only a loose Euro-Asian Federation of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Unions (EAFECBU), resembling the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),

replaced what was previously known as AUCECB. Evangelical churches did not have any strategy of outreach, yet many of them took advantage of opportunities that were readily available. In partnership with Christians from the West, they organized evangelistic crusades and the distribution of Bibles. Mass evangelism, however, rarely resulted in the discipleship of new converts. In many cases, Evangelical churches did not know what to do with the newcomers who flooded their sanctuaries and had many questions (Sannikov, 2001, p. 28). They wore non-traditional clothes and had a different pattern of thinking. Many of them were not familiar with church traditions and requested explanations of what seemed to be clear to long-time churchgoers. With the absence of any form of Sunday school education for adults, churches found it difficult to keep newcomers within the fold.

Churches waited for initiatives from the West and readily lined up behind Western 'crusaders' that brought in money that was sufficient for renting large arenas and conducting large-scale evangelistic campaigns. Mark Elliott calls it a 'mixed blessing' (Elliott, 1995), p. 67). Describing the attitude of Western Christians toward new opportunities that opened up as a result of Gorbachev-introduced freedoms, Sawatsky wrote:

One can characterise the American Christian relationship to the former U.S.S.R. between 1988 and 1996 as one of fascination with the dramatic transformations within the former U.S.S.R. That included responding with money and projects to the widespread interest in Bibles and in faith questions. Americans thought they could share experiences from the positive role that religion, in its egalitarian denominational style, had played in U.S. culture and economics (Sawatsky, 2007, p. 30).

The Church in the former U.S.S.R. was still acting in a self-preservation mode. An interview with Ion Rotaru from 19 April 2009, confirms the fact of a sharp contrast in ministers' thinking of the difference between 'the holy community of believers' and 'the world'.

The term 'strategy' in itself was foreign to the thinking of Evangelical ministers. It was a Western term, which they did not find in the Bible. Not having access to theological training and having been a part of a persecuted Church, they did not make long-term plans for the future, knowing that Christ could return at any minute. The conversation about church vision and ministry strategy began only with the establishment of Evangelical theological institutions which Western professors initiated.

Jeff Owens, a World Team missionary in Kishinev, Moldova, emphasized that one of the problems that plagued Moldovian Evangelicals, was their emphasis upon the church as a building and not people. Pastors in the 1990s were concerned as much with building projects as with winning souls for Christ. Massive construction undertaken shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union distracted churches and their ministers from taking full advantage of opportunities for outreach in the 1990s. Owens wrote:



The importance of church building is deeply rooted in the Moldavian soul. Moldavian Christians believe that without a structure a group is no more than a cult. This attitude makes it very difficult to introduce home or cell church models into Moldova. According to such mindset, in order to start a group, one must have a building at his disposal. One is reminded of the line from *Field of Dreams*, 'Build it, and they will come' (Owens, 2006, p. 7).

In interviews, Logvinenko (interviewed on 30 March 2007) and Voloshin (2 November 2006) confirmed that the relationship between Evangelical churches and theological institutions established in the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s was controversial.<sup>74</sup> When interviewed on 10 June 2007, George Boltnew indicated that 'on the one hand, leaders of the newly emerged Evangelical unions understood the importance of introducing of theological education, a relatively new phenomenon in the former U.S.S.R. While travelling to America and Europe, they noticed that the majority of ministers were educated in seminaries and universities with some institutions having strong ties to major denominations. Therefore, they followed the Western lead in attempting to establish theological schools in the former Soviet Union' (Nikolaev, 1999, p. 1). However, it seems like Evangelical churches never fully joined the process, choosing to remain in a position of observers of the West's successes and mistakes.<sup>75</sup>

Western Christians helped to establish and fund seminaries as well as supplied instructors (Elliott, 2010, p. 4). The Logos Christian College (now St. Petersburg Christian University), Odessa Baptist Theological Seminary, and Moscow Baptist Theological Seminary, were among the first established institutions with ties to Evangelical unions. Thousands of books were mailed from North America and brought into Russia and Ukraine by Western visitors in order to build the first theological libraries in what was known before an atheist *tundra* (Elliott, 1995, p. 67).

The Russian-American Institute (formerly RACU) was founded in the beginning of the 1990s in Moscow as the first liberal arts university in Russia (Broersma, 2004, p. 5; Elliott, 2008, p. 1; Obrovets, 2007). As stated by its Academic Dean, Dr. David Broersma, 'RAI is unique because it is an institute where traditions and cultures of two nations and two cultures were able to blend. The founders of the institution wanted to combine the best elements in Russian and American educational systems' (Broersma, 2004, p. 8).

On the other hand, it is questionable whether local ministers and Evangelical congregations realized the need for theological education for church leaders (Biryukov, 2005). There is no indication of any surveys taken or research done on this subject in the early 1990s

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<sup>74</sup> Dr. Insur Shamgunov (2009) offers extensive treatment of issues of church-seminary relations in Central Asia.

<sup>75</sup> Russia's complicated relationship with the West in historical perspective is well described by James H. Billington (1970).

in the former Soviet Union. With a heavily centralized structure in the AUCECB and similarly later in the national unions, churches embraced the initiatives of denominational leaders without understanding the substance of the issue (Turlac, 2011, p. 12; Nikolaev, 1999, p. 1). Church leaders did not realize that newly trained church leaders would likely form a new class of professional ministers. Students saw the pastorate as a full-time vocation, following the Western model (Biryukov, 2005). Church members and elderly pastors who went through persecution and identified the Christian faith with sufferings for Christ's name were not ready to accept the emerging new class of ministers skilled in what they saw as 'head knowledge' and not 'heart wisdom' that came from God (Turlac, 2011, p.10). Igor Podberezsky indicated the overwhelming concern of pastors over the 'Americanization' of theological institutions (Podberezsky, 2000 p. 1).

The churches' outlook on theological education was largely influenced by the period of persecutions (Remezov, 2003). Because Evangelicals were denied opportunities to receive higher education (Nikolaev, 1999, p.1), as time went by, churches developed a negative opinion about education in general (Lina Andornoviene, 2004, p. 177). If one was to be considered a Christian, one had to be uneducated (Remezov, 2003). If one had education, it usually meant that he was an atheist. Describing the current situation in the relationship between the Church and the academy, Podberezsky made the following observations:

Pastors in churches do not have theological education. Because of this, they rule over churches according to their own understanding rather than according to God-inspired principles. Many churches have an established hierarchy of elderly pastors, who hold tight to their position and salary. The young and the gifted are denied leadership opportunities. As a result, churches remain very conservative in their praxis. Everything is so gloomy and one-sided that one can get an impression that earlier believers feared persecutions but now they want them to come back (Podberezsky, 2000 p. 6).

Seminary graduates were often viewed as lacking commitment, inexperienced, and valuing their diplomas more than their commitment to Christ and His work (Dyatlik, 2009, p. 1). Having had instruction under Western professors, seminary graduates have grown to appreciate Western style church leadership and organization, which did not square well with the local churches in Russia and beyond (Mitskevich, 2004, pp. 5 – 6; Nikolaev, 1999, pp. 4 – 6).

The lack of theological education among church leaders led to a lack of knowledge of the history of the Evangelical movement in Russia. Dr. Podberezsky pointed out that in the early twentieth century, prominent Evangelicals had a positive influence in the Russian society. He wrote:

Let us not forget that not only peasants, but also those that belonged to the aristocracy, were among the first Evangelical Christians. They handed to us the tradition of respect toward our own culture. The founders of our movement were people of high culture and received excellent education. Ivan Veniaminovich Kargel', a brilliant scholar of the Bible, was a graduate of Hamburg Theological Seminary. He wrote books that are still extremely valuable today. Count Pavel Nikolayevich Nikolayi

knew several foreign languages, including ancient ones. Ivan Stepanovich Prokhanov deserves special attention in this regard. He was a brilliant engineer, entrepreneur and musician. To this very day, we sing some of his hymns. He had good relations with Leo Tolstoy, our genius writer. Vasilii Gur'evich Pavlov knew many languages (Podberezsky, 2000 p. 7).

In order to succeed, newly founded seminaries had to prove to churches that they were not posing a threat to them but rather were willing to help (Nikolaev, 1999, p. 7). The divide between church and academia, however, is still there. Evgeny Bakhmutsky, Vice-President of the RUECB, admitted the existence of a gap between the church and academia (Elliott, 2010, p. 4). According to the outcome of Dyatlik's extensive research of the state of theological education in the former U.S.S.R., 'if a seminary has fewer contacts with local churches, it experiences more problems' (Dyatlik, 2009, p. 3). While churches accused seminarians of being 'too theoretical' in their preaching, seminary students talked openly about the lack of theological training among the ministering staff in churches and even among denominational leaders (Elliott, 2010, p. 4).

Only select graduates of the first classes of Moscow and Odessa seminaries were able to apply themselves in ministry (Turlac, 2011, p. 10). Only one graduate of the first class of Moscow Seminary, Leonid Mikhovich from Brest, Belarus, presently holds a significant denominational leadership position. He serves as assistant to the President of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Union of Belarus with responsibility for educational projects and superintendent for Minsk region. He is also rector of Minsk Baptist Theological Seminary.

Conservative churches in the countryside have not readily accepted seminary graduates who for their part preferred to stay in major cities like Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kiev rather than return home (Podberezsky, 2000 p. 1).

Graduates of theological institutions in Romania, Valery Giletskiy, Sergey Namesnik, Mikhail Malancha, and Ivan Miron (all completed their education by 1994), started the Trinity Theological Institute in Kishinev, Moldova, while a graduate of St. Petersburg Christian University, Feodor Mocan, founded Grace City College in the same city (Galina Sul'zhenko, 2001). The two merged in 1995 to form the College of Theology and Education (Turlac, 2004b, p. 68). Their involvement in Evangelical life in Moldova coincided with the rise of pro-Romanian national feelings and the enthusiastic acceptance of all things Romanian by Romanian-speaking Christians in Moldova (Truscott, 1997, pp. 76-78). Later on, Giletskiy and Miron went on to become Presidents of the UCEBCM. In 2009, Giletskiy became President of the EBF (Rosler, 2009). Graduates of Russian and Ukrainian theological schools, however, do not enjoy the same degree of acceptance among Evangelicals in Moldova (Turlac, 2011, pp. 9-10).

Some graduates of the first and second classes of seminaries in Odessa<sup>76</sup> and Moscow were initially involved in educational projects but emigrated to the West within five to seven years of graduation or went to study abroad in order not to return. According to one of the graduates of Odessa Seminary, he returned to his church and asked church ministers whether they could use him in ministry. They said they could not. This response prompted him to emigrate to America. Those graduates who did remain discovered that local churches did not understand them. Their education was not valued. Older ministers saw them as competitors and, therefore, denied them ministry opportunities (Turlac, 2011, pp. 10–11; Elliott, 2010, p. 5).

Newly trained leaders who chose to plant new churches with Western help had some success because they had a larger degree of independence from the Evangelical establishment. New churches have a higher percentage of members with higher education. Therefore, trained pastors were accepted and respected.

'Light to the World' Church in Kishinev, Moldova is a story of success in this regard. Founded by Feodor Mocan, a graduate of St. Petersburg Christian University in 1994, the church enjoyed considerable growth, which resulted in the subsequent planting of another church in town, 'The Voice of Truth'. Ministers in both churches are graduates of the College of Theology and Education, the school affiliated with the UECBCM (Turlac, 2004b, p. 69). The majority of the congregations that belong to the UECBCM view the two churches as 'liberal' because of the contemporary music used during worship. They presume a direct link between theological education and 'liberalism'.

The break in the link between churches and Evangelical theological schools led to distrust between them, which in turn caused a crisis in Evangelical theological education with seminaries having to face a lack of new applicants (Elliott, 2010, p. 1<sup>77</sup>; Sawatsky, 2010, p. 25). For churches, the break meant that they would have limited influence upon society, especially upon the intelligentsia. Churches that were persecuted by the communist government for over 70 years, embraced anti-intellectualism, which hindered their growth and caused stagnation in leadership development (Podberezsky, 2000 p. 5). The situation in

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<sup>76</sup> Among them are Vladimir Kharlamov (taught at the Sioux Falls Theological Seminary, South Dakota, U.S.A.), Yuri Lelyukh (lives in the Twin Cities metropolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.), Alexander Kopytyuk (ministers in one of the Slavic Evangelical churches in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.), Sergey Borushko, Vitali Bak (serves as Senior Pastor of Bethany Slavic Evangelical Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.) and Alexander Karnaukh (ministers in one of the Slavic Evangelical Christian-Baptist churches in Sacramento, California, U.S.A.).

<sup>77</sup> Dr. Mark Elliott (2010) provides detailed information on closure of theological schools in Moscow, Russia, as well as Central Asia.

Evangelical theological education does not look optimistic with a likelihood of closure of a number of seminaries (Dyatlik, 2009, p. 4).

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

The era of the 1990s was approached by evangelicals in a state of the persecuted church. They were not ready for the reality of freedom of faith and evangelism. Social changes of the *perestroika* and *post-perestroika* eras met with eschatological sentiment that intensified with the growth of the various economic, political and social crises.

The new era that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union brought new challenges with it. In particular, instead of the ideology of state atheism, the revival of Russian Orthodox Church as the national religion started, particularly in Russia. The unfriendly attitude of the Orthodox Church to the evangelical movement had also become one of the main challenges for evangelicals with what was going on and their inability to maximize the use of the conditions for freedom of the gospel.

In other post-Soviet countries such as Ukraine, evangelical churches were faced with the need to build relationships with other denominations and the state in the unusual setting of religious pluralism and the revival of national consciousness.

The characteristic phenomenon of the era was a mass emigration of believers from the former Soviet Union, particularly to the United States. It had largely weakened the evangelical movement, on the one hand, because the most active, successful, and experienced ministers, who were carriers of the tradition, were leaving. But on the other hand, the emigration had opened opportunities for newcomers to become engaged in ministry.

The rooted traditions of Evangelical Baptist Churches became another significant impediment of effective evangelism in the 1990s. Extremely careful attitudes to the tradition actually had grown into traditionalism. A major role in this process was played by the relatively low level of theological education of church ministers.

One of the bright lights in the life of the evangelical movement of the 1990s was the process of opening up to Western culture. After the fall of the 'Iron Curtain,' the contacts with the Western churches became extremely active. The support that was received from the Western friends by post-Soviet evangelicals was necessary for the development of their churches, the building of houses of prayer and theological seminaries. However, at the same time there was an increase of resistance to Western cultural forms and patterns of behaviour that were

unusual for post-Soviet Christians. Ultimately, Westernization had become a real challenge to the evangelical movement in the post-Soviet space.

In general, the 1990s became the era of testing for evangelicals. Today many of them think of it as the time of lost opportunities. On the other hand, we can say that it was also a time of collective traumatic experience that led to a rethinking of its collective identity and the opening of its new, global dimension.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: COMPARISON OF THE EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT IN THE 1920S AND THE 1990S**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the patterns of similarities and differences between the two distinct but also remarkably similar periods in the Evangelical life in Russia/Soviet Union, the 1920s and the 1990s are examined. There are also reflections on the problem of the Evangelicals' adequate use of freedom and opportunities of 1920s and 1990s to spiritually transform the Russian/post-Soviet society. The aim is to find an answer to the question: 'What did the evangelical churches accomplish under the conditions of the 1920s and 1990s, in relation to the opportunities which presented themselves at that time?'

The study shows that three main directions in which the evangelical movement developed are clearly visible in both periods, for the solution of which the Protestant Christians had to make major efforts. They are not just the three main issues that they dealt with but three directions of development of the evangelical movement, to which this movement directed its efforts.

First of all, the evangelical movement was trying to take root in the East Slavic society. This matter was urgent as it was a cultural problem, and was a response to the rejection by society of the evangelicals as a 'foreign' church and religion. In practice, the solution to this problem was spilled over into a confrontation with the dominant ideology of communism or the Russian Orthodox Church.

Secondly, establishing tolerable relations with the state, even in the absence of repression and persecution, was a strategically important task in East Slavic society, in which the role of the state has traditionally been high. The evangelical movement as a collective agency had to acquire the confidence of the state, which had a tendency to manage and collaborate on a set of their own conditions. The success of the gospel, and in some cases, the

security of believers was largely dependent on the relationship that could be established by churches with state authorities.

The third strategic direction was the development of church structure. This question involved various aspects of internal links - community development, inter-community and intercommunity relations, hierarchies, authorities, and ministries. Thus a separate church tradition was formed – the East Slavic Evangelical movement, which defined a special religious culture.

These issues were a tangle of problems that needed to be addressed by Slavic Protestants and their leaders in terms of social change. This chapter will present a comparison of how these problems were being solved in two designated historical periods.

## **5.2 The Issue of Rootedness of the Evangelical Denomination in East Slavic Society**

It should be borne in mind that the 1920s, as well as the 1990s, were periods when attempts were made to fundamentally restructure society in the U.S.S.R./Russia. In both periods, the evangelical community was part of a society being rebuilt. However, the evangelical community also had its own goals, objectives, and its collective identity.

The most important task of the evangelical movement was the preaching of the Gospel and attracting new souls to God. To solve this problem had always been quite difficult due to the fact that the Eastern Slavic society was inclined to perceive evangelicals as representatives of the ‘foreign’ faith. This point of view was significantly reinforced by the Orthodox Church, which considered the region to be its canonical territory. By the turn of the twentieth century, Evangelical Christian and Baptist churches had survived a period of harsh persecution at the hands of the Russian Orthodox Church and the tsarist government. Prior to 1917, because of the collaboration between church and state in Russia, both the Russian Orthodox Church and the tsarist government joined forces to persecute Russian Evangelicals, who were considered sectarians. Because they did not belong to the majority church, they were marginalized and did not have an appreciable influence upon society.

The interesting feature observed in both periods under investigation was a temporary weakening of the Orthodox Church. It happened for various reasons. In the 1920s, Bolsheviks pursued a policy of suppression of all those forces which were considered to be ‘counter revolutionary.’ The Orthodox Church was considered by then to be one of those forces. But it was not only this fact, which led to the decline of the role of Orthodoxy in society. The Bolsheviks did not need the Orthodox Church as an ideological support of their power. They had their communist ideology, which they used as the basis for ideologically cementing of society. This development is important for the understanding of the situation faced by



evangelicals, missionaries, and evangelists in the 1920s. It was a time when Orthodoxy was already losing its influence, and a new ideology had not had time to establish itself. In addition, a relative tolerance to evangelical believers by the Bolsheviks, led to the fact that successful evangelization campaigns were quite common, and many people were willing to turn to God.

The 1920s raised the issue of cultural rootedness before the evangelical movement in a new way. At that time they did not need to prove that they were not a 'dangerous sect,' which had appeared as a result of 'Western influence.' Then, however, it became important for them to show their sympathetic attitude to Soviet power and communist ideology. So evangelical leaders at that time were making numerous statements showing that the Christian evangelical world in general did not contradict the communist one, but on the contrary, accorded with it.

The feature that clearly manifested itself in the 1920s was the optimism of evangelicals and especially the ministers of the gospel in the evaluation of the Gospel case. Ivan Prokhanov, despite the rather tragic circumstances of the death of his family and persecutions of him personally, did not give up the hope that an evangelical reformation would be an inevitable and logical consequence of the revolutions. His 'Gospel call' became the manifesto of the era.

In comparing and contrasting the situation in the Evangelical movement in the 1920s and 1990s, remarkable similarities emerge. The prominent Baptist historian, Sergey Savinsky, stated that one of the differences between conditions in which Evangelicals found themselves in the 1920s and the 1990s was the ideological complexity of society. He contended that the main difference was the freedom that believers had in the 1920s. They had the Russian translation of the Bible available to them. Everything was prepared so that people could come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The country was not yet overwhelmed with atheistic ideology. The Soviet government had diminished the influence of the Orthodox Church. When interviewed on 16 January 2007, Sergey Savinsky stated:

The difference between the 1920s and 1990s was in the fact that Evangelicals were excited about new opportunities. They wanted to build Christian communes and employed revolutionary language. Some even tried to reconcile Communism with the principles of the Gospel.

Vladislav A. Bachinin wrote:

At present time the majority of Russians, mainly those who have no connection to Evangelical branch of Christianity, have no idea of Ivan Stepanovich Prokhanov and that wealth of experience of social ministry, which Evangelicals had in the end of the nineteenth - beginning of twentieth century. This experience has enormous value. One has to remember that it was acquired during tumultuous times. Changes that were taking place back then are remarkably similar to changes 'in the body and spirit' of the present Russian state and civil society. We should understand that activities of Evangelicals in the 1920s are of great value (Bachinin, 2000).

The belief that the revolutionary update would also update the spiritual life was quite strong in the 1920s. Historically, its grounds were in the gradual processes of liberalization in the field of freedom of conscience, which accompanied the beginning of the twentieth century in the Russian Empire. This optimism was gradually extinguished by the repressive and manipulative policies of the new government. However, it was in the wake of this optimism and the belief that the freedom of conscience and religion would indeed be part of the policy of the new state that believers were active in evangelistic activities during the 1920s.

The evangelical movement, under different circumstances, entered the 1990s in some other state. In the 1990s, Evangelical churches also emerged from an oppressive period of persecution by Soviet authorities. For several previous decades they had been attacked by atheistic propaganda and thousands of ordinary believers and ministers were placed in camps or executed. Evangelicals in the U.S.S.R. could not conduct any missionary activity, publish Bibles and Christian literature, nor offer Sunday school religious education to their children. Like Evangelicals at the dawn of the twentieth century, churches that survived ‘communist exile,’ were marginalized. They had a very limited impact upon the surrounding society. Christians had created a closed subculture that, on the one hand, made sure that the church survived persecution, but on the other hand, worked to limit the state’s interference with the activities of local congregations.

Freedom of worship and evangelism, which came with the collapse of the Soviet socio-political system, was a surprise to Russian Protestants and their leaders. This was especially true, because its emergence was accompanied by a significant political and economic crisis. Instead of optimism, it caused an eschatological sentiment among believers. The traumatic factor was the openness to different cultural influences that had suddenly appeared in the post-Soviet space. After decades of living behind the ‘Iron Curtain,’ many believers were unable to accept cultural diversity and pluralism as the norm.

After the collapse of the U.S.S.R., evangelicals faced a disintegrating economy, political chaos, and several generations of people raised under atheism. The challenge of reaching them was enormous. According to Ruvim Voloshin, interviewed on 2 November 2006, ‘The first enthusiastic response of churches quickly diminished as leaders were more concerned with preserving the *status quo* and maintaining control over the lives of believers.’ According to Savinsky (interviewed on 16 January 2007), ‘Church leaders in the 1990s did not have the vision of Prokhanov and Pavlov. They focused upon survival rather than outreach.’ Voloshin further asserted:

It was hard to live in conditions of freedom in the 1990s. People began to challenge old assumptions and prohibitions. During the times of persecution, Christians had to risk their lives, whereas during times of freedom, no one was required to sacrifice for their faith. During the periods of persecution, life became

easier because believers had more clarity. They knew their enemy. When freedom came, people fell prey to materialism and became passive in church life.

Despite the fact that by the early 1990s the evangelical movement had already been in the region for over a century, it again faced the problem of non-recognition as an 'indigenous' religion. It was directly connected with the revival of the Russian Orthodox Church and the gradual return of its dominant role in the religious spectrum. Post-Soviet states in the 1990s objectively gravitated to the search of national religion and church, which could become a consolidating factor for the split post-Soviet society. Historically, Orthodoxy had been considered to be such a church in Russia. Here the situation was especially favourable for the restoration of the role of the Orthodox Church as a state one. The Russian Orthodox Church gained strength during the second period of Boris Yeltsin's presidency and enjoyed wide popular support into Putin's time in power. The Ukraine, which had also been looking for ways to revive the national church, failed to do so. Ukrainian society had originally developed as a pluralistic one (Casanova, 1998, pp. 81-103), so here the Evangelical community had the most favourable conditions for development and evangelism. At the same time, the evangelical movement globalized extremely fast because of the dynamic networking with believers of Western countries, especially the U.S., as well as emigration.

The issue of spiritual and social responsibility is a matter of importance in comparing the post 1917 period and the 1990s. It is evident from archival records and various publications of the period after the February Revolution of 1917 that Russian Evangelical leaders felt a tremendous responsibility for the future of a new Russia and tried to do everything they could to contribute to its implementation. They engaged in conversation with the intelligentsia and the government over the issue of a spiritual revolution in the country. Driven by dreams of a brighter future for Russia and Russian Christianity, Prokhanov devoted all his energy to making sure that the country entered the path of spiritual resurrection and revolution (Bachinin, 2000).

In contrast, in the 1990s, Evangelical churches were still in the self-preservation mode, not seeing that they could act as agents of transformation in post-Soviet society. According to Logvinenko (interviewed on 30 March 2007):

God had opened the doors for believers to go and actively preach the Good News to the lost. They began to see mass conversions. Those were incredible times, indeed. However, as time passed, churches started to focus more on institutional matters and internal questions. Churches got distracted from missionary work.

In general, it must be said that statistically the gospel did not gain significant results in either the 1920s or 1990s. The maximum achievement was about two percent of the population who considered themselves to be 'Protestant' believers or belong to evangelical churches. Though the zeal of American and other Western Evangelicals in doing missionary

work in post-Soviet space was commendable, according to Sergei Golovin, their activity yielded only insignificant results:

The change from the time when 80 percent of the population declared themselves as atheists during communist control, until after the collapse of Communism when 80 percent of the population proclaimed themselves to be believers, can hardly be considered as a Christian awakening. Vast missionary intrusion into former Soviet countries during the last decade of the twentieth century produced only an illusion of the harvest. It very slightly challenged the worldview of the people, if at all. Massive evangelistic campaigns were regarded merely as an enrolment into a new type of organisation (Golovin, 2008, p. 62).

The presence of the evangelical community cannot be measured only statistically. Due to the periods of revival and activism that occurred in the 1920s and 1990s, the evangelical faith has become more visible and rooted in the East Slavic society. Evangelicals began to be perceived as a legitimate religious denomination, although periodically and at the household level, believers from time to time continued to be called 'sectarians.'

### **5.3 Evangelical Movement and the Government**

Relations with the state have always been a significant aspect in the history of the evangelical community in the Soviet/post-Soviet territories. On those territories one of the biggest totalitarian states was established and the control of government agencies and authorities over all aspects of human life has traditionally been very strong. Because of this, many Christians have undergone intense oppression from the very state, which sought to regulate the state of religion and the church.

It is significant that the periods of the 1920s and 1990s were the periods of apparent weakening of state structures and state influence on society. Because of this, the renaissance of spiritual life was possible, as well as church activism and the mass, almost uncontrolled, evangelism.

Since the February Revolution of 1917, Russian Evangelicals received opportunities to influence society and the process of shaping a free Russia. Thousands of Evangelical prisoners were released from camps and had tremendous testimonies of suffering for their faith that could potentially encourage many others to convert. Evangelical leaders proposed positive changes for Russian society. Ivan Prokhanov addressed the Russian *Duma* while Vasiliy Pavlov gave lectures on the subject of religious freedom at the Plekhanov Institute. Both Evangelical Christians and Baptists received to some degree opportunities for social work, feeding the poor, and welcoming back into their midst those who returned from prison camps. When interviewed on 16 January 2007, Savinsky pointed out, 'Regretfully, the period of freedom did not last long. It came to an end in the late 1920s and was followed by harsh persecution of believers under Stalin.'

In the 1920s the initial stage of the formation of the Soviet totalitarian state was taking place. All liberal reforms carried out in the time the Bolsheviks were temporary. They were experimental. Evangelicals had also participated in these social experiments, particularly in the construction of collective farms, communes, and cooperatives. Evangelicals, and especially their leaders, saw the possibility of their interaction with the government on an equal footing. Initially, they allowed themselves to express disagreement with some aspects of public policy, debate the laws on military service, even to express some demands. They sought to act in the interests of their community. Creating their communes, they saw them primarily for believers and communities of believers in order to create a certain environment in which the evangelical movement could be developed and to educate a new generation of believers. All these actions on their part later became regarded by the Bolsheviks as signs of disloyalty of Evangelicals to the new government and became a pretext for repression against them.

Soviet authorities did not regard religious movements, like any other social movements, as equal to them as members of society, but considered them to be objects of their policy. They aimed for the education and re-education of society according to their communist ideology. To this end, they were willing to use violence and pressure on virtually an unlimited scale.

Russian Evangelicals in 1917 and post-Soviet churches of 1990s lacked unity. Their leaders did not enjoy unanimous support for their programmes and demands. There were differences between Evangelical Christians and Baptists regarding the issue with the Baptist, Ivan V. Kargel, criticizing Prokhanov's 'flirtation' with the Bolshevik authorities. It has to be noted, that Soviet authorities, for their part, were not particularly interested in cooperation between the two Evangelical groups. Andrei Savin wrote:

Religious policies of the Soviet Government of the U.S.S.R. in the 1920s can be characterised as a domineering line directed toward the internal disintegration of the confessions, and by provoking conflicts among their various religious currents. Such conflicts achieved the division of believers into several opposing camps. The most important tools for carrying out the policy were selective administrative and judicial repressions, the issuing of detailed regulations and the constant surveillance of congregations by the security organs (*Cheka, GPU, OGPU*) (Savin, 2012, p. 1).

The government's lack of interest in cooperation can be seen by the fact that Prokhanov left Russia in 1928 and did not return because of threats made against him by the Soviet government. Other leaders of the evangelical movement were repressed in the 1930s.

The policy of the government in the 1990s was fundamentally different. At that time, there was a formation of independent nation states and the attempts of liberal reforms were made on the territories of the former Soviet Union. Reforms introduced by Gorbachev continued under the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin. According to Anatoly Redin

(interviewed on 7 December 2006), ‘Churches received opportunities for evangelism and outreach when the Soviet Union and the Communist system were rapidly disintegrating. Hundreds of stadiums, city halls, former Soviet palaces of culture, schools, universities, and library halls opened their doors for the preaching of the Gospel.’

Unlike Evangelicals in the beginning of the twentieth century, post-Soviet Evangelicals enjoyed a longer period of freedom, which lasted for more than a decade (1988–2000). They received an opportunity to influence society and provide spiritual direction to those in power. New religious laws were adopted in 1997. Vladimir Putin’s coming to power on 31 December 1999 marked the end of the period of virtually unlimited freedom for post-Soviet Evangelical churches. He was an advocate for the introduction of anti-sectarian legislation into the Russian Duma that limited the activities of so called, ‘non-traditional faiths’ (all except Russian Orthodox Church, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism).

A preliminary historical experience of repression, which evangelical believers underwent during the Soviet period, largely prevented them from optimally exploiting new opportunities of freedom, which opened in the 1990s.

Even though Evangelicals faced unprecedented opportunities after the February Revolution of 1917, they faced a number of challenges they were not able to overcome. First, Evangelical believers, who emerged from the period of persecution at the hands of the tsarist government and the Orthodox Church, had a very short period after the February Revolution to take advantage of new conditions on freedom. In the new situation, they faced the need to regroup and organize themselves. Though both Prokhanov and Pavlov were visionaries, they did not succeed in communicating their goals and dreams to the rest of the believers. Churches that were coming out of a period of suffering were not ready for active involvement in politics and the process of building a free society. Many did not support Prokhanov’s vision of organizing a political movement that would express the ideas and dreams of Evangelical Christians in post-Soviet space.

Likewise, it took even longer for Evangelical churches to realize and take advantage of new conditions of freedom that fell upon them so unexpectedly after Gorbachev’s announcement of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*. Churches that were persecuted by the state naturally viewed the government as their enemy. They were by no means ready to cooperate with it. In 1990, when Evangelical churches in Moldova received an opportunity to nominate their own candidate to the local governing body, the issue generated so many disagreements among believers that church leaders dropped the issue altogether so as to not cause splits and enmity. When in 1988, the Moldova Television Network crew came to film the Sunday

worship service at the Kishinev Evangelical Church to produce a documentary, ordinary churchgoers looked at the operators with deep suspicion.

When interviewed on 20 March 2006, Piotr Zeona indicated, 'Post-Soviet Evangelicals accepted freedom cautiously. Instead of integrating into the society and attempting to influence the process of change, they rather chose to be observers who watched developments from a distance.' According to Vasiliy Logvinenko (interviewed on 30 March 2007), 'freedom brought with it too many complications. Many pastors could not relinquish tight control of churches. They were unprepared to see believers exercise freedom of choice.'

Members of CCECB churches faced similar opportunities. However, they were even more cautious regarding the new freedoms that swept the former U.S.S.R., taking time to see whether that was not another 'carrot' offered to them by the government. When interviewed on 7 December 2006, Anatoly Redin stated, 'Unregistered churches and their ministers were so entrenched in a "persecution mentality" that they continued to see persecution where it did not exist.' Though all members of CCECB churches were released from prison camps by 1988, the rhetoric of continuous oppression by the state continued at least until 1997 (Turlac, 1997, p. 1).

A younger generation of leaders who replaced Soviet-era ministers did not develop any clear vision for churches in post-Soviet society (Cherenkov, 2011a). Golovin indicated that while in 1993, All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Associations (AUUECBA) churches baptized 1,500 new converts, in 1998 numbers appear to be more than modest, with only 750 new converts baptized (Golovin, 2008, p. 33). Baptismal statistics in the Ukraine began to show a drastic decline since 1996.

Only a handful of Evangelicals were elected to governing bodies in the countries of the former U.S.S.R. Among these were Reverend Valery Giletskiy in Moldova who served in the Parliament from 1998 to 2000 (Giletskiy, 2011) and Pavlo (Pavel) Unguryan, a member of the Odessa *Duma* at the end of the 1990s that currently serves as a member of the Ukrainian *Rada* (Dorofeeva, 2009). Though their presence in the governing bodies of Moldova and Ukraine is of significance, they could hardly influence the important political decisions of governing bodies in their countries.

The fear that the state might resume repression against believers and that the time of 'freedom' was temporary, pushed believers to emigrate from the former Soviet Union to the Western countries. Emigration had become a kind of protest of believers against the Soviet state and was the result of an extremely strong mistrust to it that had been experienced by evangelicals as a result of long-standing conflicts with the authorities in the Soviet era. Their disbelief that freedom can exist for a long time was formed from the habit of living in a fully-

controlled and closed society. Indifference toward the future of post-Soviet society, the lack of unity and visionary leadership (Cherenkov, 2011a), as well as mass emigration to the West resulted in a considerable weakening of the Evangelical movement and stagnation in its growth and development by the end of the 1990s. While not facing any substantial threats in the end of 1980s-1990s, a number of Evangelical leaders chose to emigrate from the former U.S.S.R for new homes in North America, Europe, and Australia (Valuisky, 2000). Many talented church members followed them, being preoccupied more with material well-being than with concern over the future of post-Soviet society (Tsvirin'ko, 2000).

At the same time, many new churches and evangelical denominations emerged which were able to establish a loyal relationship with the state and take advantage of conditions of freedom (Long, 2005, p. 133).

In general, the relations of the evangelical community and the state evolved differently in the 1920s and 1990s due to the differences of the previous collective experience and because of the uncertainty of the state policy in the transition period.

#### **5.4 The Development of Church Structure**

In both periods, the Evangelical movement's structure and agency was entering a state of depression and partial destruction. It faced the need to equip their churches and unions. This was due to the fact that the church structures could not develop freely in the previous periods and with the influx of new believers who had to be spiritually nurtured. In this direction, it was possible to observe almost the opposite trend. In the 1920s, the issue of unification was raised before the evangelical movement. Optimism about the reunification of Evangelical Christians and Baptists in one union was quite significant. But these hopes were dashed. Both Prokhanov and Pavlov were strategists and visionary leaders of Russian Evangelicals. An article on life and ministry of Ivan Prokhanov, published on Christians from the Pacific Coast Slavic Baptist Association (U.S.A.) website, indicates that the ability of Russian Evangelical leaders of the 1920s to formulate a Christian programme of action and demands of Evangelicals was not matched by Christian leaders of later times (2009b).

The authors of the article also emphasize that even though Ivan Prokhanov, Vasiliy Pavlov, and Pavel Pavlov were able to formulate a basic vision and proposals for Evangelicals, they did not find unified support among the movement's followers. Prokhanov shared his thoughts about disagreements among Christians on what he considered minor issues with V.A. Pashkov, who at the time lived in France:

I think that differences of opinion concerning secondary issues do not destroy but rather build up and enrich spiritual unity of different movements within Evangelical Christianity. This fact opened my eyes upon the truth that Evangelical leaders should concern themselves, first of all, not with dogmatic formulae



of faith, which build walls, but with requirements of Christ's love, which is higher and stronger than all walls. It is the source of power of the church on earth (Prokhanov, 1898, p.1).

The vision of cooperation between Evangelical Christians and the Orthodox Church largely remained only Prokhanov's dream. In his autobiography, Prokhanov wrote about this dream in the following:

God's purpose for my life is to be a communicator of His gifts to the needs of the people. This sort of vision never left my soul. I often remembered the face of my Saviour, who appeared to me in a dream. It was glowing with heavenly joy and kindness ... I felt like I should take upon myself His yoke ... Indeed, that was a calling to ministry of communication of His riches to the world and poor sinners (Prokhanov, 1933, pp. 43-44).

Prokhanov sought to realize his goal of social transformation by founding as an example the Gethsemane Evangelical Settlement (commune) in Tverskaya Guberniya. This venture, however, did not receive widespread support (2009b). His ideas of political involvement and inter-church dialogue seemed too radical for the majority of Evangelical Christians. Talks over unification between the Evangelical Christian and Baptist unions failed because of the personal ambitions of leaders in both movements and, possibly, because of involvement of the state, which pursued a 'divide and rule' philosophy at the time.

In the 1990s, the Evangelical Baptist Union, on the contrary, emerged with a large, unified structure, which included the great number of members. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, this structure also collapsed. Though Evangelicals were structurally united under the umbrella of AUCECB, they did not withstand the challenges of nationalism and separatism (Panici, 2003, p. 4); (Patz, 2013). The breakup of the AUCECB in the autumn of 1992 followed the rapid disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. In the place of AUCECB another organisation was created called Euro-Asian Federation of Evangelical Christians-Baptist Unions (EAFECBU). To this very day, the EAFECBU plays a formal role. It has not been effective in preserving unity among Evangelical unions in the former Soviet Union. It was obvious that because of separatism, no unified vision could be maintained, thus undermining the prospects of fully utilizing the new opportunities of the post-Soviet period. Mikhail Cherenkov calls the 1990s 'a period of unrealized opportunities' (Cherenkov, 2011a). Gradually new denominations and new structures, as well as alternative unions, which had stayed in the underground before, acquired an official status during this period, and the issue of organizational unification practically ceased to be on the agenda.

An important aspect was the issue of education of believers. In the 1920s there was no practical ability to develop theological Christian education, schools, and seminaries due to the lack of financial resources and restrictive governmental policies. In the 1990s significant progress was achieved on this issue.

A significant factor was also the fact that Evangelical churches in the 1990s enjoyed much more financial support from Christians in the West than Soviet Evangelicals in the 1920s. Evangelical churches that belonged to the AUCECB were slow to respond to new opportunities for outreach that presented themselves in the 1990s. Churches were not ready to abandon the mentality they developed during persecution rather than to follow the leadership of Western Christians in evangelistic crusades and outreach campaigns (Turlac, 2011, p. 8). Western Christians largely took over missionary activities in the former U.S.S.R. According to Redin, ‘Westerners led evangelistic campaigns, planted new churches, published Bibles and Christian literature, and provided humanitarian aid for believers in the republics of the former U.S.S.R.’ Western believers were involved in the organization and sponsorship of hundreds of summer camps<sup>78</sup> and retreats for children and young adults, as well as the founding of the first Protestant theological schools in the former U.S.S.R.<sup>79</sup>

Because of a lack of education and vision, Evangelical leaders did not develop any feasible vision or programme of action (Cherenkov, 2011a). For the same reason, local Western-led evangelistic efforts frequently did not result in any substantial increase in church membership, and did not increase the influence of Evangelical Christianity upon society. The Ukrainian scholar, Sergei Golovin, blamed the West for the use of ‘one size fits all’ simplistic methodology of Evangelism, which, according to him, was not grounded in the Bible:

The main reason for the shortcomings of the traditional Western evangelistic methods in Eastern Europe is related to the fact that they are far away from biblical practice. One will never find in the Scriptures most of the expected common elements of the evangelism of today: the Four Spiritual Laws, the invitation to make a decision for Christ or to open the door of one’s heart to Jesus, the altar call, or the repentant sinner’s prayer. All these practices have no direct connection with Scripture; they are rooted in traditions developed in historical Western culture. When those traditions are taken away from the cultural ground where they were developed, they turn into para-spiritual techniques or technologies. In order to reach peoples of former communist countries, the church should return to biblical methods of evangelism and develop applications of those biblical methods appropriate for the exact context of each particular regional subculture (Golovin, 2008, p. 29).

It should also be borne in mind that the 1920s and 1990s were the different stages of formation of the East Slavic evangelical tradition. In the 1920s, this tradition was only in its formative stages. Yet, no doubt, even then certain inviolable customs were observable, which were acknowledged to be biblical and were the backbone of the biblical and evangelical collective identity. One of these traditions was an ancillary place of women in the church

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<sup>78</sup> In 1991, the Logos group from Canada organised the first camp for Russian children in Belorechensk, Krasnodarskiy Krai, Russia.

<sup>79</sup> At the end of the 1980s, Christians from North America organized the first Evangelical Bible School (now St. Petersburg Christian University) in Belorechensk. In 1989, Western Christians helped found and continued to support the Bible School in Odessa (now Odessa Baptist Theological Seminary). American Baptists helped establish the Moscow Baptist Theological Seminary in 1993. It became the bastion for the training of Russian Evangelical ministers and theologians.

leadership. Women were absent from pastoral and preaching ministry, except in instances of a lack of any male counterpart. This attitude toward role of women in the church has remained virtually unchanged to this day.

In the 1990s, Evangelical tradition had already been formed and established. They largely determined the development strategy of the local churches and the entire brotherhood. Thanks to them the Evangelical community had its appearance, but with that it was not ready to adapt to changed circumstances.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In spite of all the problems, Russian Evangelicals took better advantage of freedom after the February Revolution of 1917 than they did in the 1990s. Their desire to initiate the spiritual transformation of Russia was birthed from within the movement. In the 1920s, their influential leaders, Prokhanov and Pavlov, understood that Christians should play a major role in the spiritual transformation of society. They did not just hold to vague ideas but offered concrete proposals that could have changed Russian society, given a longer period of liberty. After the February Revolution, Evangelicals utilized their resources for the purpose of the spiritual and social transformation of Russia. They had not relied on Western initiatives and financial aid, as was the case in the 1990s.

Though due to similar historical circumstances in 1917-1920s (drastic political, social and economical changes) in the life of Russian Evangelicals, the decade of the 1990s can be named an ‘era of missed opportunities.’ Evangelical churches failed to overcome their fortress mentality in order to work effectively in post-Soviet society. It took time for the ‘oppressed’ church to realize that the surroundings were changing at a high speed (Prokopchuk, 2012). Because of their closed inner culture and worn-out and often inadequate leadership, churches did not effectively welcome the multitude of newcomers, including those from the intelligentsia. Ministers that lacked theological education had trouble answering complicated questions that came from artists and musicians, and did not take time to nurture the new believers. Golovin wrote:

Reaching a certain level of maturity takes time. When a person accepts Christ, he or she declares Jesus as Lord and Saviour. In the beginning, however, the only thing in which the person is interested is salvation. Only some time later does the new believer realise what the lordship of Christ really means. Only then the person reaches the point traditionally called commitment. At this point the worldview of the person (ideals, goals, values, priorities) undergoes a serious transformation that can even be considered another *metanoia*—a cardinal change of the mentality, the one to which everyone is called (Golovin, 2008, p. 49).

Rather than taking the lead, they chose to follow the lead of the West, which often sought to provide simplistic answers to the complicated post-Soviet reality. Golovin asserts,

‘Not all people who come to Christ have the same worldview. Some people go to church to get something; others to give. Although all believers are called to do the latter, it does not happen right away’ (Golovin, 2008, p. 48).

As a result, the Evangelicals missed an opportunity to transform the society that desperately needed reform and moral uplift. Given the historical circumstances (World War I and II, February and October Revolutions of 1917 and Stalin's and Khrushchev-led oppression of believers), it has to be said that until Gorbachev-introduced freedoms of religion and worship (at the end of the 1980s), Russian Evangelicals have never had any lengthy historical opportunity to spiritually influence their country in a profound way. Unfortunately, opportunities of spiritual transformation of Russia were missed both in the 1920s and 1990s, which in fact is the country's great tragedy. Should such times arrive in the future, new generations of Evangelicals in Russia/the former Soviet Union can surely learn to avoid the mistakes and shortcomings of their predecessors.

## 6 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This thesis assessed the similarities and differences in the life, social and evangelistic activities of Russian Protestants after the Socialist Revolution of 1917 and the 1920s, as well as the Evangelical churches in the 1990s. Particular attention was given to analyse the response of Protestant Christians to the possibilities of evangelistic and social outreach. The research focused on three main areas (1) the establishment of roots in Eastern Slavic culture, (2) the relationship with the state, and (3) the development of the inner church culture. Even though these two periods (1920s and 1990s) in Russian Evangelical history showed similarities, Russian Evangelicals of 1920s used the opportunities offered to them by political and social circumstances better than Evangelicals of the 1990s. In the 1920s, there was better trust developed with the government and in the 1990's after years of persecution, the trust for the government was not there and the freedom would be short lived. Further on, while Evangelicals and their leaders of the 1920s strived to achieve a Russian Spiritual Revolution and Reformation, in the 1990s, Evangelicals failed to pursue the course of involvement in the life of the post-Soviet society and rather found an escape in emigration to the West and continuous isolationism. The Evangelical church that was weary from persecution needed a breath of fresh air of freedom and a considerable length of time to rethink its inner culture and future prospects before it could influence Russia/the former Soviet Union.

The Russian Evangelical movement was born due to several factors: (1) the translation of the Bible into Russian, (2) agricultural reform, (3) the stagnation in the life of the Orthodox Church and (4) a positive influence of Western missionaries. In spite of the harsh persecution from the government and the Orthodox Church, Russian Evangelicals in 1917 preserved a missionary zeal. Evangelical leaders and ordinary believers strived to reach the country and took an active part in the life of Russian society. They advocated for freedom of worship for all.

The period between February and October of 1917 brought freedom and new opportunities for the Evangelicals. During that time, they attempted to initiate reforms. Regretfully, they experienced divisions in their midst that weakened both movements and limited their impact upon Russian society.

The year of 1917 marked the transformation of the hearts of Russian Protestants as revealed in the 'Russian Spiritual Revolution'. It emerged out of believers' love of their country and a deep desire to change it. Evangelicals stood for freedom of conscience and a free country for all. Russian Evangelicals attempted to open themselves up to society as much

as possible. They openly expressed their political and social demands for change, and were active in the promotion of the Spiritual Reformation of Russia. The Evangelicals tried to find their own identity, and deal with disagreements in their midst as well as find their place in society.

The period of freedom after the Socialist Revolution up until the mid-1920s saw a remarkable rise in social activity of Evangelicals who thought they had finally achieved religious freedom and opportunities to transform society spiritually (Coleman, 2005). The 1920s witnessed a significant rise in activities of the Evangelical youth and women. Missionary and social work were the main issues discussed at congresses and conferences.

Evangelicals were eager to cooperate with the Socialist government in the building of the new society. They established agricultural communes, cooperatives and Christian settlements, with the purpose of serving as models and examples to the rest of society. Believers rushed to take advantage of new opportunities to involve themselves in the social and spiritual transformation of Russia.

By the end of the 1920s, Russian Evangelicals realized the complete impossibility of cooperation of Christianity with the Bolshevik government. The government initiated a period of harsh persecution of Christians. Evangelicals were pressured to submit to the requirements of compulsory military service, thus compromising one of the important principles upon which they stood. The security service began to exercise control over churches and attempted to destroy them from within.

Also, by the end of the 1920s, the State relinquished attempts to conduct ideological education. Atheistic lectures gave way to repressive measures as Evangelicals were treated as the last elements of a counterrevolution. Opposing the Marxist theory of social transformation, Evangelicals stood for a Spiritual Revolution. The Bolsheviks saw Evangelical faith as a competitor for the minds of the young people and, therefore, were eager to destroy religious life in the Soviet Union.

Having experienced persecution and pressure from the state since the late 1920s, Evangelicals struggled to survive. The state inspired the split in the AUCECB at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, which virtually brought registered churches under the control of the state.

Having developed the fortress mentality throughout the decades of persecution, at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, churches had to meet the challenges of new times. Evangelical congregations struggled to rethink their role and mission in the emerging post-Soviet society of the 1990s. They devoted considerable effort and energy to dealing with controversial issues of church liturgy and practices that arose in their midst. Instead of

attempting to influence society, believers chose to close themselves to the outside world and hold to the subculture, which they developed through the years of communist oppression. Efforts to change the internal church environment by means of theological education failed as hundreds of seminary graduates did not find acceptance in local congregations. Western missionaries primarily led evangelistic and social efforts as thousands of Evangelicals chose to emigrate to the United States of America and other Western countries.

During the 1920s, Evangelicals enjoyed ideal circumstances for growth and expansion of the movement in Soviet Russia. After the Socialist Revolution of 1917, Russian Evangelicals enjoyed the support of the Bolshevik government, which aimed to destroy the Russian Orthodox Church. Since Bolsheviks saw similarities between the Evangelical way of life and Socialism, they supported the idea of assisting the Evangelicals in forming cooperatives and agricultural communes. The Evangelicals before the 1920s went through the period of unprecedented persecutions from the tsarist government and the Orthodox Church. They, therefore, readily embraced new opportunities of offering a positive influence upon the country. Leaders Ivan Prokhanov and Vasiliy Pavlov were catalysts of Evangelical energy during the period (Mikhovich, 2005).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the 1990s, Russian Protestants received freedoms they had not seen since the early 1920s. Regretfully, during the period of persecution from 1929 to the late 1980s, churches, on one hand, formed an inner culture that kept them alive and clearly separated them from the influence of the outside world, which was perceived as hostile toward them. On the other hand, churches could not avoid duplicating some of the forms and clichés prevalent in the society in which they lived. This mixture of effects of internal subculture and elements borrowed from the Soviet society, contributed toward the formation of fortress mentality in the 1990s and the closure of Evangelicals to opportunities offered to them after the disintegration of the U.S.S.R.

It was possible to reach these conclusions after answering several analytical questions regarding (1) the openness of the Russian Evangelicals to the new socio-economic opportunities of the 1920s, (2) the factors that contributed to initial positive relationship between the Socialist government and the Evangelicals and (3) what influenced the break-up between them. Looking at changes that happened in the 1990s, further questions were asked that related to (1) the readiness of churches to accept new freedoms, (2) the factors that slowed down the response of churches to changes, and (3) the tendencies that led to failure of believers in the 1990s to influence the spiritual and socio-economic transformation of society.

Nineteen Evangelical administrators, regional ministers and pastors were interviewed regarding issues that the churches faced before and after the 1990s. The results of these

interviews showed that the 1990s brought a 'mixed blessing' to Evangelical churches. On one hand, churches were eagerly praying for religious freedom and longing for relief from Soviet oppression. On the other hand, once freedom became real, they failed to use resources and opportunities to influence society in a way that would bring about a positive transformation. Though ministers that served in the AUCECB in the 1970s - beginning of 1990s (Reverend Vasiliy Logvinenko, Reverend Dr. Alexey Bychkov and Reverend Victor Loginov), generally are very critical of changes and new tendencies in theology and *praxis* of churches after 1991. Just like younger pastors (Reverend Ivan Rotaru, Reverend Ruvim Voloshin, Reverend Leonid Kartavenko), they agree that Evangelicals could have done more to transform Russia and the newly formed independent countries.

Without question, the 1990s can be seen as the 'era of missed opportunities' in contrast with the 1920s, the 'era of golden opportunities', because churches were unable to do away with the fortress mentality and open themselves up to society. Because of a closed inner culture, churches did not manage to welcome newcomers. Unlike the Evangelical leaders of the 1920s, ministers in the 1990s were not enthusiastic about Evangelical cooperation, fearing that ecumenical contacts may lead to biblical compromise (Kolomiytsev, 2012). Rather than taking the initiative, Evangelicals chose to follow the lead of the West (Elliott, 1995, p. 67). The issue of financial support pouring from the West for large mass-scale evangelistic crusades, contributed to the inequality of Westerners and local Christians. Due to these factors, they missed the chance to transform a society that desperately needed change. This led to a drastic minimization of the Evangelical participation in social processes in the former U.S.S.R. and the stagnation in church growth.

There can be a number of practical ideas that can be applied by Russian/Slavic Evangelical churches in the former Soviet Union and in the West:

(1) Evangelicals should look for an adequate assessment of historical realities in which they live, namely, political, economic, social and cultural changes that take place during a particular time period. Churches in twenty-first century Russia should learn from the Evangelicals of the 1920s, who made bold attempts to seize the moment, having evaluated changes that were taking place in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century.

(2) Having assessed present historical realities, the churches should consider what can be done to adequately influence the society, having honestly and realistically evaluated their status in the country/society. Regretfully, such an evaluation did not take place at the end of 1980s - beginning of 1990s, which contributed to failure of the Evangelicals in reaching the peoples of Russia/the former U.S.S.R.



(3) Considering the present situation in Russia and especially in Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union (the 'Stan' countries), churches should be ready for a wave of limitations of their activities and even persecutions from the state as well as from the dominant religious groups. It is evident that Evangelicals of the 1920s had not expected the new wave of oppression that came from the Bolsheviks in the 1920s - 1930s.

(4) It is recommended that Evangelicals undertake a serious study of their own history and analyse political and other factors that caused splits and disagreements in their own midst, namely; (a) the relationships between Evangelical Christians and Baptists, (b) Baptists and Pentecostals, (c) registered churches that formerly belonged to AUCECB (and presently to RUECB) and CCECB (now International Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists). Too often, it seems, Russian Evangelicals focused on what happened instead of asking 'why certain things took place' and 'under which circumstances certain events happened?'

(5) Churches and unions should examine what is their theology and foundational beliefs. A detailed study of theology and praxis of churches should be conducted as to distinguish foundational Evangelical principles and traditions that were developed throughout the history. This study sheds light upon the issue that in a number of instances, Evangelicals borrowed traditions/positions from Russian culture (dress-code, influence of the Orthodox traditions), CPSU (authoritarian style of church leadership) and developed them as a result of pressure from the Soviet authorities (age requirements for baptismal candidates, use of musical instruments in the church, and a stance on military service).

(6) Russian/post-Soviet Evangelicals should initiate an honest dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church and the West. Evangelicals should establish, if possible, a healthy line of communication with the dominating church in Russia in order to maintain their presence and activities in the country. Also, they need to clarify their relationship with Western Evangelicals by establishing clear guidelines for partnership and Western involvement in church life.

(7) Evangelicals that emigrated to the West in the 1990s are in need to know the reasons why they emigrated. This will help them in understanding who they are and what course of action they are to take to avoid, on one hand, the total loss of their identity, and on the other hand, the preservation of the 'fortress mentality', which did so much damage to churches in the 1990s in Russia/the former Soviet Union.

Further research is needed to investigate issues related to the influence of changes in political, economic and social life in the former U.S.S.R. of the 1990s upon congregations in the twenty-first century. It is of great interest to see whether churches of the 2000s will be

able to overcome the 'fortress mentality' and inner closure problems of the 1990s to serve as catalysts of positive change in post-Soviet society in the days to come.

At the present time, when a number of Evangelical churches and church organizations in Russia are rediscovering their Evangelical Christian roots (Puzynin, 2010)<sup>80</sup>, it would be of interest to study whether contemporary Evangelicals will adopt some of Prokhanov's and Pavlov's strategies to foster a Spiritual Revolution in the country (Cherenkov, 2012).

Another issue of interest that might require additional research concerns Slavic Evangelical emigration (Turlac, 2012). In this study, an attempt was made to further develop issues related to the emigration of post-Soviet Protestants to the West raised by Gennady Sergienko and Oleg Turlac, as well as to assess the present day situation in which Russian Protestants find themselves in the West. The work of Vitalie Sprinceana on Moldavian Evangelical emigration to North America was especially helpful in this regard (Sprinceana, 2011).

And to conclude, even though in the 1990s many opportunities for changing post-Soviet society have been lost, it is not too late for post-Soviet Evangelicals to return to their roots and examine positive examples of the 1920s that could lead to the gradual spiritual transformation of the society today.

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<sup>80</sup> Dr. Andrei Puzynin (2010) leads the way of rediscovery of the Russian Evangelical Christian tradition. Another leading Evangelical theologian, Dr. Mikhail Cherenkov (2012,) leads the discussion of the identity of contemporary post-Soviet Evangelicals.

## GLOSSARY

Agitbrigada	Propaganda Team
Akademiya nauk	The Academy of Science
Al'ternativnaya sluzhba	Alternative Military Service
Antireligioznik	Anti-religious Bulletin
Bezbozhnik	Atheistic Bulletin
Betonit	Concrete Works
Biserica	Church
Bolsheviki	Bolsheviks (the majority party)
Bratskaya pomoshch'	Brotherly Help
Bratskiy sovet	Church Council
Bratskiy vestnik	Fraternal Herald
Chas sily dukha	The Hour of Power
Chestnyi truzhennik	Honest Worker
Chistka	Purge
Chlenskoye sobraniye	Church Business Meeting
Chyornyi tyul'pan	'Black Tulip' Plane
Dedovshchina	Abuse of Younger Soldiers
De Facto	As a Matter of Fact
Duma	Lower House of the Russian Parliament
Edinstvenniki	Pentecostal believers that baptised only in the name of Jesus
EKhB	<i>Evangel'skiye khristiane-baptisty</i> Evangelical Christians-Baptists

Eschaton	End Times
Evangel'sk	The Good News City
Ex Nihilo	Out of Nothing
Federal'noe sobraniye	Federal Assembly
Glasnost'	Openness
Gorod solntsa	The Sun City
Guberniya	Regional Formation
Initiativnik	Group that petitioned the government of U.S.S.R. to allow Evangelical Christians-Baptists to hold a congress in the end of 1950s to the beginning of 1960s.
Ispolorgan	Church Executive Committee
Isus Salvatorul	Jesus our Saviour
Khristianskoye primorye	Christian Far East
KhVE	<i>Khristiane very evangel'skoy</i> Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals)
Kiyevskaya Rus'	Kievan Rus
Kolkhoz	<i>Kollektivnoye khozyaystvo</i> Collective Farm
Komsomol	<i>Vsesoyuznyi Leninskiy kommunisticheskiy soyuz</i> <i>molodezhi</i> The Young Communist League
KPSS	<i>Kommunisticheskaya partiya Sovetskogo Soyuz</i> The Communist Party of the Soviet Union
Kulak	Literally 'Fist.' Wealthy peasant or merchant
Leitourgia	Liturgy
Molitvennyi dom	House of Prayer

Nabor	Graduating Class
Novoiyerusalim	New Jerusalem
O sluzhitelyakh tserkvi	Concerning Church Ministers
Oblast	Region
Obnovlennaya tserkov'	The Renewed Church
Obozhenie	Deification
Otdelennye	Unregistered Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CCECB)
Molodyozhnye kruzhki	Youth Groups
Molodyozhnye obshcheniya	Youth Fellowships
Neregistrirovannye	Unregistered
Paradosis	Tradition
Perestroika	Reconstruction
Pyatidesyatniki-sionisty	Pentecostals-Zionists
Pishcheprodukt	Food Production
Pomestnyi sobor	Assembly of the Russian Orthodox Clergy
Pravda	Truth (Russian Bolshevik Newspaper)
Predanie	Tradition
Profsoyuz	Trade Union
Prokofievtsy	Followers of Alexei Prokofiev, leader of unregistered Evangelical Christians-Baptists
Propovednik	Preacher
Rada	Ukrainian Parliament
Registrirovannye	Registered
Sektanty	Sectarians
Slovo istiny	The Word of Truth

Sola Scriptura	Scripture Alone
Sovet rodstvennikov uznikov	Council of Prisoners' Relatives
Sovet tserkvey	<i>Sovet tserkvey evangel'skikh khristian baptistov</i> The Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists
Sovetskaya Rossiya	Soviet Russia
Sovetskiy Soyuz	Soviet Union
Sovkhoz	<i>Sovetskoye khozyaystvo</i> State Farm
Sroybat	Military Construction Battalion
Superkniga	Superbook
Svet miru	Light to the World
Teologia suferintei	Theology of Suffering
Tolstovtsy	Followers of Leo Tolstoy's Philosophy
Upolnomochennyi	Plenipotentiary
Utrennyaya zvezda	The Morning Star
Vecherya lyubvi	Meal Shared by Christians
Vestnik istiny	Herald of Truth, All-Russian Plenipotentiary Commission
VSEKh	<i>Vsesoyuznyi sovet evangel'skikh khristian</i> All-Russian Council of Evangelical Christians
VSEKhB	<i>Vsesoyuznyi sovet evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov</i> All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists
Zagranpasport	International Passport
Zampolit	Officer in the Soviet Army responsible for political education of soldiers
Zemsky sobor	Local Administrative Assembly in Russia

Znanie

Knowledge

## **APPENDIX A**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FORM**

Name of a Person Interviewed:

Date of Interview:

Location:

Position (Ministry):

Period Covered:

Region:

Major Questions:

Specific Circumstances:

Additional Notes:



## **APENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

#### **The Period Prior to 1990s**

What was the attitude of the outsiders toward believers prior to 1990?

What were the goals of Evangelical Christians-Baptists prior to 1990s?

What was the mission of the church in the Soviet Union in 1970s – 1980s?

Did the KGB and State authorities pressure the leadership of the AUCECB? What did leaders of the time do to cope with such pressure?

Did efforts of the CCECB do something positive to bring about change in church-State relations in the U.S.S.R.?

What was the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church upon the life and doctrinal beliefs of Evangelical Christians-Baptists?

#### **The 1990s and Post-Soviet Era**

What was your attitude toward the collapse of the U.S.S.R.?

Did freedom of 1990s present a more substantial challenge for churches than persecution of Soviet period?

Was Evangelical Christian-Baptist church ready for the coming freedom of 1990s?

Did Communism and atheism leave any traces in church's life and polity?

Was Western influence in evangelism and other areas of church life in 1990s more helpful or more harmful?

What was the role of tradition in the life of churches?

What was your attitude toward participation of churches in political and social life?

What is the future of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist movement in Russia?

What should Evangelical Christians-Baptists do to break away from the image of 'sectarians'?

Why were first theological schools established in the former U.S.S.R.? What was their role?

Can you share the statistics of churches in Russia in 1990s?

Why did national unions choose to separate from Moscow's AUCECB and to form regional brotherhoods instead of staying unified?

In which circumstances churches found themselves after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. in Moldavia and Ukraine?

What percentage of members of churches and ministers emigrated to the West?

What was the reason for the Evangelical emigration of 1990s? Why did leaders of the AUCECB churches that endured persecution during Soviet period of history, choose to emigrate from the U.S.S.R.?

Were resources sent in 1990s by Western Christians utilized in a rational and responsible way?

What did it mean to be Evangelical Christian-Baptist in Russia in 1990s?

What were goals of churches in the region where you ministered in 1990s?

Which period could you call 'the golden years' for Evangelical Christians-Baptists?

How did ministers and church members react to the collapse of the U.S.S.R.?

Did the political and economic chaos of 1990s (Yeltsin's era) affect churches?

Do you see traces and remnants of the Communist system in the life of congregations of 1990s?

Were churches able to fully recover from the fortress mentality of Soviet times?

Was there any evangelistic strategy in place in Evangelical Christian-Baptist churches or did they follow the lead of the West?

Were churches ready to reach out to the society or did they expect people to come to churches on their own?

Was Western help a 'mixed blessing'?

### **Questions, Comparing the 1917-1920s and 1990s**

What were historical circumstances that believers found themselves in Russia in after 1917 and in the 1990s?

Can you compare the circumstances and efforts of the Evangelicals in 1920s and 1990s?

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEWS BY NAME, POSITION, DATE, AND LOCATION

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
Beddow, Peter	Participant, EBF Congress, Lillehammer, Norway, 1994	Toronto, Canada	17 February 2011
Boltniew, George	Past President, Russian-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the U.S.A.	Ashford, Connecticut, U.S.A.	10 June 2007
Bychkov, Alexei	Former General Secretary of AUCECB (1971-1990)	Moscow, Russia	5 December 2006
Kartavenko, Leonid	Chairman of the Department of Missions, RUECB	Moscow, Russia	13 April 2007
Kulikov, Vitaly	Associate Pastor, Central Moscow Baptist Church (since 1987)	Moscow, Russia	4 December 2006
Franchuk, Yakov	Evangelical Minister, Russian Far East	Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.	15 August 2006
Levashov, Victor	RUECB Senior Presbyter, North Caucasus, Russia	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.	25 August 2007
Loginov, Victor	Former Bishop of UCEBCM (1992-1994) and Former AUCECB Assistant Senior Presbyter for Moldavian S.S.R. (1979-1992)	Kishinev, Moldavia	7 March 2006
Logvinenko, Vasiliy	Former AUCECB President (1985-1990) and Former RUECB President (1990-1993)	Odessa, Ukraine	30 March 2007
Ormanji, Victor	Pastor, Light to the World Evangelical Church and Instructor, Baptist College, Moldavia	Kishinev, Moldavia	11 May 2009
Pascal, Vyacheslav	Pastor, Bethel Evangelical Church, Kishinev, Moldavia	Kishinev, Moldavia	15 January 1996
Perebikovskiy,	Member,	Kishinev,	11 April 1996

Vasiliy	Autonomous Evangelical Christian- Baptist Church, Kishinev, Moldavia	Moldavia	
Redin, Anatoly	Pastor, Ryazan Evangelical Church, Russia	Ryazan, Russia	7 December 2006
Rotaru, Ion	Pastor, Jesus Our Saviour Evangelical Christian- Baptist Church, Kishinev, Moldavia	Kishinev, Moldavia	19 April 2009
Savinsky, Sergey	Russian Evangelical Historian. <i>Author of History of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the U.S.S.R.</i>	Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A.	16 January 2007
Voloshin, Ruvim	Vice-president, RUECB	Moscow, Russia	2 November 2006
Zeona, Piotr	Pastor, Chernovtsy Evangelical Christian- Baptist Church, Ukraine	Chernovtsy, Ukraine	20 March 2006
Zhirov, Pavel	Evangelical Pastor, Ryazan' Oblast', Russia	Ryazan', Russia	31 March 2006
Zhushma, Peter	Pentecostal Immigrant from Belorussia	Birmingham, Alabama, U.S.A.	10 June 1999

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